WOMEN OF COURAGE, ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE

NOVEMBER 15-17, 1987

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY

CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR

MRS. JEANNE DREIFUS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

TRANSCRIBER - J. DOUGLAS SIMS

ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE

MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY

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MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

NOVEMBER 15, 1987: 4:00 P.M. "MAKING HISTORY: WOMEN'S STORIES, WOMEN'S LIVES" WITH DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL, COORDINATOR, BLACK WOMEN ORAL HISTORY PROJECT OF THE SCHLESINGER LIBRARY, RADCLIFFE COLLEGE. COMMENTS BY DR. ZELMA GEORGE, DR. BONNIE DILL, AND PRESENTATION BY TERESA SLOYAN OF THE OFFICE OF MAYOR RICHARD C. HACKETT.

DR. BONNIE DILL: Well, I also want to welcome you and thank you for coming out today and for sharing with us this exhibit which we have worked with a number of groups in the community to bring here. I think in many ways this has been a first for Memphis State and a number particularly of Black women's organizations in this community and Harvard-Radcliffe to bring this event here and to have these exhibits here.

And I just want to acknowledge Dr. Delano Black who is representing the College of Arts and Sciences and who has worked so hard on this and Jeanne Dreifus who will say a word to you in a minute who have really worked beyond belief to get this here. I also want to acknowledge and thank all of the people who have been a part of the planning committee. Would you please stand if you were part of the planning committee and you are in the room at the moment. I see a few of you stand up. Stand up (laughter), stand up, planning committee. We thank them (applause) for

their hard work.

We began meeting over a year ago, and at the time that we started it seemed like it was a long way off and that we had lots of time to plan lots of things and of course it came very fast. There are going to be over the course of the next month that this exhibit will be here, a lot of different events that will be going on that have been organized by different groups. We want to get as many segments of the community in here as possible. We are going to have senior citizens, we are going to have children, we are going to have school children. I was just talking to someone a few minutes ago, who works with the deaf, and she wants to get something on for the deaf, so we're still encouraging everyone to come and see the exhibit and share with you and again I want to greet you on behalf of the University and thank you for joining us. Thank you.

JEANNE DREIFUS: Thank you, Bonnie, and Dr. Black, and thanks to a generous grant from the Tennessee Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities and with the assistance of the Memphis State University Academic Enrichment Fund and, also, the Harvard-Radcliffe Club of the Mid-South who is hosting our reception today. I would like very much to introduce the president and members of the organization and those who are here, please stand and let

us thank you. Well, there are endless numbers of people to thank and you will be glad to know I am not going try to do them all, but as you know, it has been a historic planning process.

We are extremely honored and grateful to have with us Ruth Edmonds Hill, a distinguished librarian, and without librarians, where would we be? We wouldn't be anywhere. We wouldn't be scholars. We wouldn't be authors. We wouldn't be readers, and I just have to say, for all the librarians present and for those of us who have had anything to do with learning, we are grateful for you all. Ruth Edmonds Hill is the heart and soul of the Black Women Oral History Project at Radcliffe College and you will meet her during the next two days as well as her husband, Brother Blue, about more later. Ruth has been with this project since 1977, I will let her tell you of its fascinating history and the role it has played across our country on behalf of the underwritten history of women and Black women in particular. My association with the program has been since 1984 when I learned that the exhibit, Women of Courage, would be available to travel to other cities than Boston and New York where it premiered to intrigued, excited, and stimulated audiences. We, by the way, were fortunate, with the help of Bonnie Dill, to have Dr. Cheryl Townsend Jilkes as a research associate and resident scholar at the Center for

Research on Women who also was instrumental in helping to become an interviewer of the Oral History Project. And it is she who interviewed Anne Tanneyhill for the historical record.

But I would like to tell you a little bit about Ruth. Her long and creative career as a librarian began at the University of Southern California, then at Columbia University School of Library Service, then as librarian in many capacities at Harvard, in the Comparative Zoology Library, the Widener Library with its eleven million volumes, and earlier at the Berkshire Community College and at Yale in the Sterling Library. She joined the Black Women Oral History Project in 1977. This is the tenth anniversary, can you believe, of this wonderful project. And during its development, Ruth Hill has developed her skills in storytelling, oral history, research, and as an author and lecturer, not to mention managing and serving as agent for her husband, the energetic "Brother Blue." It is for her own qualities of deep dedication to the project, concern for education and preserving the inspiring lives of our foremothers and forefathers that we salute her today. It is my privilege to present Ruth Edmonds Hill.

(Applause)

RUTH EDMONDS HILL: Thank you for a lovely introduction. I thought in case some of you have not met

the man I would introduce Dr. Hugh Morgan Hill, known as "Brother Blue." Now, would you please stand. (Laughter, applause) He is very difficult to miss, in terms of color, and extremely verbal. Thank you.

I am going to be rather informal, I think. I am going to tell you a little bit about the Oral History Project, and I think we will spend a little time with the lives of some of the women and perhaps read a little bit from their interviews. The Oral History Project at the Schlesinger Library began in 1976.

It is interesting Jeanne mentioned the tenth anniversary. I had rather have forgotten it, but especially the Schlesinger Library began with the idea that they would have a three-year project, and by hook or by crook, we have managed to stay alive for ten, going on to eleven, years. So, the project was suggested by Dr. Letitia Woods Brown, a Black woman who was professor at George Washington University, and at that time was on the Advisory Board of the Schlesinger Library. She particularly realized that the Schlesinger Library had very little information on the contributions of Black women to American society. And the Schlesinger Library was the premier library as far as holdings on American women's contributions was concerned. So it is important that there be some recognition of the contributions of Black women. The Schlesinger Library

Advisory Committee accepted the idea and the next thing was to get funding. But in 1976 the Oral History Project began.

We have seventy-two interviews. Most of the women were in their seventies and older. We have some women who were in their sixties. And there is one woman who is quite a bit younger who was chosen for her contribution to civil rights activities in Boston. But she had been very ill and was not expected to to live and they wanted to get her story. And I don't know whether telling her story helped, but she is still alive and and well. But we have seventy-two interviews.

We interviewed women who worked in law, medicine, nursing, business, education – obviously, since we are at an educational institution – politics, social work, any area you can think of. We have I think three women who are ordained ministers. But, before I get into the project specifically, I want to talk a little bit about oral history itself.

We may not realize it, but once all history was oral history. The man who, yes, I will have to say, the man who was writing history (laughter) would go out, for example, onto the battlefield and interview participants in the battle and come back and write his story, tell his story, or whatever. But this was the way historical information was gathered. But, paradoxically, technology saw brought about, in a sense, the death of oral

history and has brought again a revival of oral history. With the printing press that changed, that made this change, there was a way of collecting material and preserving it on paper, distributing it in multiple copies. And so by the eighteenth century, history was studied through the documents, through the paper documents. We were dealing with the treaties, the town meetings, or whatever, and in a sense, they had forgotten the living person.

In the 1940's, Allan Nevins, a professor at Columbia University, professor of history, began to interview people who had been involved in New York City politics. And he went with a graduate student to interview these people. You may not realize it, but the tape recorder hadn't been invented, the wire recorder hadn't been invented. The graduate student took notes, and a couple of weeks ago, I met the graduate student, who now is no longer a graduate student but a man about to retire from teaching, and the graduate student went with Professor Nevins, and the graduate student wrote as fast as he could, then he would rush back to his room and try to reconstruct the whole interview. And, that was the beginning of what we call modern oral history.

And it took off in the direction that the historical documents, the paper documents, had done. We were dealing with the elite, with the people who were in power. And, eventually, with the invention of the tape

recorder particularly, people took things into their own hands and everyone, in a sense, began to feel that they could be an oral historian. But, it was the invention of the tape recorder that made this change that brought us back again into dealing with the individual, talking to the individual, getting that person's life story, their, whatever their contributions were. Now, some of the reasons for oral history.

Let me pick up something else, something that I wrote some time ago about the program at Columbia University and why they said they were collecting oral history. They launched their oral history research office on the premise that scholars, by conducting knowledgeable interviews, could elicit source materials that would prove of value to future scholars even though there was no way of divining in 1948, any more than today, what the interests of future scholars might be.

Okay, that is one of the fascinating things about oral history. In a sense, you are creating original source documents. You don't know why you are creating them. You are not absolutely sure what you are creating, but you hope that somewhere in the future someone will find, let's say it's like going gold mining. You are hoping that someone's going to find a little gold in this material. But the reason Allan Nevins began to interview people involved in New York City politics he realized there was an inadequacy of

documents for twentieth century history as sources for the history of the twentieth century. And it seems that what is history quote unquote becomes history faster than it used to. Once we thought history was a hundred years ago. But now it almost seems as though history was yesterday. When we were collecting this material, and I'm going come back now to the Black Women Oral History Project.

One of the reasons that I think oral history is used so much is that people began to realize that there was a gap in our historical material or there might be a distortion. When I say distortion in the sense – let's use the Black people as an example that all Black people were slaves in, say the 19th century, but there were free Black people too and so when we are thinking about history, the history of Black people in this country, we just think Black people, quote unquote slavery, quote unquote. So oral history has been used in a way to help fill these gaps, to help set the record straight. So many people have found their own way to write their own history. So as it has included Black people, it has included Native American peoples, it has included women, and this is where the Black Women Oral History Project comes back. The Schlesinger Library collects materials on the history of women in America from about the 1820's and continuing today and the Black Women Oral History Project here was an

attempt to fill a gap in the resources of the Schlesinger Library. One thing that was done in writing the grant proposal was to suggest that it would be a fine opportunity to make this material widely available. So with the funding that was received the Schlesinger Library was able to distribute the bound volumes (I'll talk a little bit about how we got the bound volumes) but to distribute the bound volumes free of charge to thirteen institutions around the United States.

So this included instituions like Columbia University or the University of California at Berekley and at the same time included Fisk University, Atlanta University, and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. We realized that everyone was in the same situations as the Schlesinger Library. They just did not have material on the contributions of Black women. So from 1976 to 1980 – I think I said seventy-two – we did receive one interview last year so we have 73 interviews. But from 1976 to 1980 seventy-two interviews were done with women, Black American women who were mostly in their seventies and older.

And we were not neccessarily looking for women who were nationally known, but we wanted women who had made significant contributions in some way to improving life for Blacks particularly but for all people in the United States. So with the help of an advisory committee we were able to

select about a hundred women that we wanted to interview. Now these names came from mail and from the telephone. Talk about the pony express. People would grab you on the street corner and say, "Oh, I heard you are doing oral history. I have a grandmother. I have someone that you should interview." But we ended up with four hundred names in the files and we selected about a hundred women and with the funds and the time that we had available we were able to finally to do seventy-two interviews.

The interviews were done on cassette tapes and this was a national project with interviewers and interviewees all over the country and the material came to my office, was transcribed and sent back to the interviewer and interviewee to do some editing, came back to my office again, we did a lot more work, did library research, eventually did a complete retyping of the interview and we have each woman's life in a separate bound volume. So over the years I have been seeing the shelves grow. First maybe five volumes, then ten, but now we have sixty-five volumes, so there's a certain amount of joy in seeing this expanding collection.

Now, the kinds of questions that were asked. The interviewers were not given specific questions. You're dealing with complete life histories.

We asked them to talk about family background. We wanted information on the women's education. We asked questions that had to do with significant influences on their lives. It might be a historical event, it might be a famous flood in their communmity, it might have been a teacher or their own mothers, who knows? But we asked them about significant influences upon their lives.

And let me go back to a couple of things that may have been – it's amazing the kinds of information you get. And one woman we were asking about family backgrounds and this is what she came up with. I won't read the whole thing, but just to refresh my memory, I will look at it. We were asking about her grandparents. And when I say "we", I didn't do all the interviews, I did a couple of them but we had women all over, as I said, who were doing the interviews. But we asked about family background and we got into great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother and Lucy Mitchell, in just telling the story, said that her great-grandmother told about her mother who was a slave on a plantation in Virginia.

Now the thing that was hard to realize when we think of England that has been going on and on and on, as far as we are concerned, this is still a very young country and we forget how close we are to the beginnings of this country, but the great-grandmother told about her mother who was a

slave on a plantation in Virginia. And one day, the slaves on this plantation were gotten up early and gathered and they were going to see a man who was going to ride off and take care of an army. This was Lucy's words, "take care of an army." That was the way the story had come down to her. Well, believe it or not, this man was George Washington and he was riding off to the Revolutionary War. And you just don't realize how close you are still to the beginnings of this country.

But that just came out in asking some questions about family background. But I might add that we did have the interviewers take time to go and visit the woman before the interview took place. And the reason for this was these Black women, even the very young, well-known women were not included in the standard biographical dictionaries, so usually in doing oral history you would do your preliminary research and get some something I would call an armature, like in sculpture, the armature around which you are going to structure your interview. But this was not available, so the women would have a preliminary session, and the interviewer would look at family scrapbooks, newspaper clippings, whatever, and just talk to these women a little bit about their lives to get some sense of what was going to come up when they did do the interview.

And let me mention significant influences on people's lives. There

was a woman named Christia Adair and she was a schoolteacher at one time in Texas. In Texas, yes. And her husband was a brakeman on a railroad and he was on a train which President Harding was taking. He wasn't president then, he was a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. He was taking a tour and her husband sent her a telegram and said teachers are bringing schoolchildren out to meet the train and he said "Why don't you see what you can do?"

She had been a teacher but she was no longer a teacher at this time, so she went to the school and asked if she could take some of the children to meet the train. And her husband told her exactly where it was going to stop. So she had her little children all lined up ready to shake hands with the candidate, Harding. Other teachers from the other schools, you will remember that, in this time, there was still complete segregation in the South, so when I say teachers from the other schools, I am speaking of the white teachers who had brought children. Now Christia Adair's children were in front, right where the train stopped, because her husband had told her where to place them and where he was going to stop the train. But Harding reached over the heads of the little black children and shook hands with the little white children.

And she said if this is the way Republicans do – you will recall that

black people were mostly Republicans, feeling they owed this debt to Abraham Lincoln for freeing them – she said if this is the way Republicans do, then I'm going to have to become a Democrat. So she changed to the Democratic party. She was involved in Texas politics later on in her life, but this small thing, it seems small, but it made a complete change in her life.

We asked the women about how being Black and how being female affected the options that they had in their lives, and we asked them, obviously, about discrimination, segregation, and often they said no, they hadn't really felt that, and in reading some of the interviews and looking back on it, my feeling is that our perceptions are different now of what is discrimination or not discrimination or segregation or not segregation. Just as women now will not accept some things from men and speak of it as sexual harassment. A certain period of time, just that this is the way it is. And we took it, and so it's really difficult to know whether or not they really did not feel segregation or discrimination or whatever it was or whether just their perceptions were different. I'm going to leave that for a socioligist or someone to work on.

We asked them about their most important achievements. Now the interesting thing that I have found in a number of interviews that I have

read that these women involved in politics, law, medecine, or whatever it was, often spoke of their families as being their most important achievement. One woman who was a doctor had six children, all the time keeping up her private practice. And when asked in a sense why she had so many children, she said, "Well I had this opportunity, I had the education, I had the money, I felt that I could give children a lot, give them an education, and I wanted to bring children into the world to contribute in this way and to have some children who . . . " Well, one of her daughters became a doctor, one of her sons became a priest, but she felt that she was helping the world, not only through her medicine, but through her family.

So there were many, many, many more areas of discussion for the interviews but let me tell you a little bit about the Women of Courage. In 1980, Judith Sedwick contacted me. She had read about the project in a newspaper and just said, "Well, I'd like to make some kind of a contribution." So I looked at her portfolio, liked very much what I saw and we decided that she would photograph some women in the New York-New England area. So I think think it was about eight months later that she came back. Don't forget, this was a freelance photographer – you have to earn your living. So this was in between times that she was doing some

photographs on the Black Women Oral History Project. Well, the only way I can describe it is to say we all fell in love with the work, with the photographs that she brought to us. And when she brought them in said, "We're going to have an exhibit some day." Now to us some day meant maybe five years from now, who knows?

But Radcliffe at that point decided that they would raise some money for her to travel and continue her photographs. And in early 1984 she was visiting a friend at the New York Public Library and had a couple of the portaits from the New York Public Library – I mean with her at the New York Public Library. And here I'm going to put in a plug. You must look at the photograph of Florence Edmonds, who is my mother. And Judith said, "I had your mother's portrait with me and that's how we got the exhibit." Because the New York Public Library said, "Oh are you planning an exhibit," and Judith said, "Of course, of course, we're planning an exhibit," and this was March, 1984. And the New York Public Library said "Well, we'd like to have it in December of 1984." So in October, Judith was in Mississippi finishing up photographing it, but from March until December we got an exhibit together, and I'm very proud of the work that was done. But the value of the exhibit has gone well beyond its being, I think, a fine photographic exhibit, and I'll just give you some examples of that.

In Boston you often read and hear about some of the feelings among the different ethnic groups. And I was at the Boston Public Library hanging the photograph and a man who perhaps was in his fifties and rather roughly dressed just kept hanging around. And I just said I gotta get this exhibit up. I didn't say it, but your feeling is, don't bother me, I gotta get this exhibit up. And he just stayed around for maybe half an hour and I sorta, in my mind, said, " South Boston," and there you often think of these people not feeling particularly favorable toward Black people and my mind just said, "South Boston, South Boston." And finally this man came up and he said, "This is a great exhibit. Why didn't anybody ever know about these people before?" And I thought that's why we had the exhibit. And it's not didactic. It just speaks for itself. You are drawn in by the photographs, by the little biographical sketches, and it just has been, I think, so wonderful in the effect that it has had on people without, in a sense, our having to hit them over the head.

And another example, the exhibit was recently at Wayne State University and, as you will be doing here, they brought different organizations in to see the exhibit but also they had meetings within the space of the exhibit. And there was a group of Headstart mothers who came to the exhibit. Who had a meeting there. And when they wrote the

report for me they said, "It's so wonderful, these women had never been to a university, had never thought of anything like that and from this experience they're now talking about when our children grow up and we're going to be able to send them to college how we're going to be able to help them do that." And to me that's the value of this exhibit, that it just has so much meaning for so many – so many people.

Now let me just read a couple more things, if I can find them here. Melania Cass in Boston was mostly a domestic worker but she also was involved, actively, in the life of the Black community and also became president of the NAACP in Boston at one point. And so I included her in something that I wrote and mentioned the question about significant influences on these women's lives and she described her neighbors as quote a lot of women around, just ordinary mothers, and people who had families, women that I admired. There were women who we looked up to, who were leaders in the community, just simple leaders. They weren't educated women or professional women or doctors or lawyers. They were just simply people who lived in the community who tried to help you and tell you things to do. When she was greatly influenced by her mother-in-law who was a worker in the NAACP and church work and her mother-in-law persuaded her to go out and get involved in voting and, as a

matter of fact, speaking of the NAACP, as I recall, she said her mother-in-law thought there was someting wrong with you if you didn't join the NAACP. So that's how she got involved.

And Olivia Stokes. Olivia Stokes is an educator and I forget what church she's been associate minister of. But she lives in New York City and she talked about a childhood experience. The family saw Mary McCloud Bethune who was an educator and who had come to New York City to speak at the Abyssinian Baptist Church and this is the way Olivia spoke of her, Mary McCloud Bethune. With a face as ugly as God ever made, her comment that night was, "Look at me. I am the most beautiful woman you'll ever see." And so Olivia said that there were, I think, four children in the family, "We all snickered because we were seeing beauty eye-wise. When we got home, my Mother leaned across to us and said, "We'll talk about that lovely statement Dr. Bethune just made." And we all stopped giggling. We learned of beauty of soul."

And I'm going to take a moment to just talk about my mother. I should tell you how she got into the project, too. I just told Dr. Crawford's secretary this a moment ago, but I had read about the project myself. It had been going on for about eight months I think before I got the position as Coordinator of the Project.

And I kept saying to myself, "Oh, I should submit my mother's name, I should submit my mother's name." And if you're like me, you procrastinate. You don't do some of the things you should do. And then I got the job as Coordinator of the Project. Now, how do you submit your mother's name.? (Laughter) Well, the way we selected women to be interviewed was for me to compile a list of maybe twenty women, thirty women, thirty names with brief biographical sketches. Often these sketches turned out to be inaccurate, we found out as the interviews came in, but we had a little bit of information. So I included my mother's name in a list of twenty, twenty-five names and we had an advisory committee meeting in person. Usually this was done by mail and they would send back their votes but we happened to have an advisory committe meeting in person and someone said, "Oh, isn't your maiden name Edmonds?"

And I said, "Yes."

"Is she related to you?"

And I said "Yes." (Laughter) "It's Mother."

But they had already said, from the background that I had submitted that they would like to interview her. But she was a public health nurse in Pittsfield, Massachusettes and the story I'm going to tell you that she told in her interview was about an experience that she had one Christmas.

Pittsfield is in the Berkshires in Massachussets, and at that time there would have been a small Black population. This was in the 1940's when she became a visiting nurse there. She had had her training and she had worked in New York City at the Henry Street Settlement and then she went back home to Pittsfield to raise her family. So with the Second World War, the Visiting Nurse Association invited her to go on staff and she did not put in her application, she just said "I felt that it was not – that Pittsfield was not ready for a Black nurse."

And the Visiting Nurse Association finally contacted her and said "We've already accepted you. Would you please put in your application?"

But the story she told was of going to a home at Christmas and knocking on the door and someone in the family opened the door and the mother was very ill and this person who opened the door said, "Well, we expect this is going to be Mother's last Christmas on earth." And they weren't directly dealing with what they wanted to tell my mother but what they wanted to say was that we don't want you to come in. And she said, "Well the visiting nurse sent me." (She was substituting for someone else.) But this family, trimming the Christmas tree, preparing for Christmas, would not let my mother come in and take care of their mother. So she went to a phone and called the Visiting Nurse Association and told

the story and then continued to visit other families. Well, that family called up and said to the Visiting Nurse Association, "You never sent a nurse to us today."

And so I always use my mother as an example of just the daily courage that Black women, Black people go through. Each day, she had to go out not knowing who she was going to face, but knowing most likely it was a white family not knowing whether or not she would be accepted, and if she wasn't accepted apparently it was only because of the color of her skin. And so all of these women, in some way, have lived this life of courage. Thank you. (Applause)

JEANNE DREIFUS: And I would like to introduce to you now this gentleman who is helping us here. Dr. Charles Crawford, please, who is going to chair the Oral History Conference to which I hope many of you will attend. Will you come and give us a little additional information.

DR. CHARLES CRAWFORD: When I heard of the Women of Courage achievement at Radcliffe my first thought was, "Why didn't we do that?" and then "Why don't we do that?" And that is what we're trying to accomplish in the Women of Courage Oral History Conference during the next two days. It seemed to me and to the people

who work with oral history at Memphis State that our community has had the same kind of problems, namely the contributions of women, especially the contributions of Black women, have been neglected. And those of us who teach history know this to be true. In part it is because there is so little information. It should have been collected, it wasn't. We feel it should be done beginning now.

What we hope to accomplish in this Oral History Conference is work with all interested people, women, Black women, people who aren't Black, people who aren't women, anyone who cares to learn. But we have some specific objectives, and we want to make it possible for people who represent any kind of group or only themselves, but would like to save the record, the oral history record, the reminisences, the memoirs, that people they know in our own area have. We have brought in some people who are extremely skilled and experienced in what they are doing. Let me tell you briefly now about the program which begins tomorrow and to which you are all invited and which we hope you will recommend to any friends who represent any women's groups, church groups, professional or social groups, any others who might be interested in collecting any oral history memoirs. Of course, we would be interested in photographs also, hopefully of a quality comparable to what we have seen (laughter), but we want all

the records we can get – family records, old photos, anything we can get, for this should be preserved for history.

Now, I believe that all of you have received programs or should. They are available on the table as you leave and there are really, I think, almost no changes that I need to tell you about. Perhaps the only one, Dr. Crawford who makes the opening remarks, had agreed to speak for less than thirty minutes (laughter) so we will have more time for the professional sections. Now we also have some things that we think will be fun as well as work.

We have a bus tour, a few meals are scheduled, we do have an opportunity to meet and get acquainted with (which was a great pleasure for me in St. Paul last month) Brother Blue. We have some good things coming up. We also have a bus tour to some special kinds of places. All of these you can designate on your registration form. The entire conference is free. There are some things such as meals for which there is a charge, but the conference itself is without charge whatever, presented through the courtesy and the help of the Tennessee Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Liberal Arts Development Fund. So all of that we are offering.

And I would like – though we have several of us from this area who

are assisting and who will take some part – I would like to introduce now the people you need to be meeting tomorrow for they will be dealing with the specifics of how to construct an oral history project or just how to do a single oral history interview. So far as we know, they are dealing with every aspect that you are likely to need to know. If they are not including it, it is simply because we didn't think of it and you could attend the conference and cover that in questions which they will be pleased to answer.

Two people we have, and I will ask them to stand in a moment, who will be doing the technical and specific advising in our three sessions, one at eight thirty tomorrow, another at ten forty-five, and the third one on Tuesday at nine forty-five a.m. are Professor Alferdteen Harrison who is Professor of History and Director of the Institute for the Study of History, Life, and Culture of Black People at Jackson State University in Mississippi. She has done a good deal more and we're delighted to have her with us. (Applause) The other person who is to help us in developing oral history projects and doing oral history interviews is Dr. Johnye Strickland who is founder of the Oral History Program of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Professor of English and Professor of Humanities and experienced in several oral history projects as well. Dr. Strickland, could

you stand up (Applause) We hope to see you in the sessions tomorrow. Thank you very much. (Applause)

JEANNE DREIFUS: We have several other exciting presentations for you that we will conclude the program for this evening. I would like to introduce to you Teresea Sloyan who represents Mayor Richard Hackett's office.

TERESA SLOYAN: Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here tonight on behalf of Mayor Hackett as Memphis celebrates the opening of the Women of Courage exhibit here at Memphis State University. I bring to you tonight greetings from Mayor Hackett as well as a proclamation which I would like to read to you, Jeanne, and the many guests here. It is a proclamation by the Mayor and it begins, "Whereas, for hundreds of years women have struggled, battled, and labored to earn one of life's most precious treasures, freedom. Freedom to write, freedom to work in a contributive environment, to enjoy civil rights, and to express oneself artistically, and whereas Women of Courage is a collection of photographs drawn from the Black Women Oral History Project of Radcliffe College, capturing the strength, serenity, and heroism which all women share, and whereas the exhibition is a visual record of the life of service and accomplishment of Black women throughout the

United States, now therefore I, Richard C. Hackett, Mayor of the City of Memphis, Tennessee, do hereby proclaim November 19 through December 19, 1987 is Women of Courage Days in our city and ask our community to acknowledge the outstanding lives these women portrayed in photographs and to remember the many Memphis women of our Black community that contribute so much to the betterment of the lives of all our Memphians." Thank you. (Applause)

JEANNE DREIFUS: One of our honored portraitists is with us this evening. Dr. Zelma George. And it seems like the icing on our cake to have you here and to greet you once again, Dr. George. And there will be a special presentation at this time so, will your colleagues please come foreward? And while they are doing so, I must say a very special thank you to the College of Fine Arts, to Dr. Carol Crown, to the University Gallery and its excellent staff who have worked tirelessly to open its exhibit early and to help us in every possible generous and kind way and we are hoping that you will come back many times with your friends and children and grandmothers and everybody else and enjoy the exhibit during its stay here until December 19th. We're very grateful for all the support we've all had. Dr. George, is a representative here from AKA sorority?

VOICE IN AUDIENCE: There are about twenty of them here.

DR BONNIE DILL: Oh, good, would you come forward? Dr. George is a distinguished sociologist, musicologist, international expert, and a representative to the United Nations from her organization and will certainly be glad her words of encouragement to our exhibit and we're very honored to have one of our portraitists with us tonight. Thank you. (Applause)

DR. ZELMA GEORGE: I thank you for that applause. When you get to be eighty-four years old, and you can look back at the things that have helped you to become whoever you are, you will find models in the lives of people that you meet – that you met in your family, your church and your school – some of them were good and some of them weren't. (Laughter) And it's like mothers. They say all mothers are great and they're not. Because I've had the products of some of them in the Job Corps. And I know that many mothers do not do a good job and there are many . . . (Laughter) Well, we might as well admit it, we know it's true. And so, therefore, other people have to come in and have to augment the things that they don't get around to doing and one of the reasons that this exhibit is to me very important is that it can offer some role models of people who didn't let themselves be discouraged and who

are still around.

Now when the exhibit was in Cleveland I had the privilege of having a program that involved octogenarians of great accomplishment and I could have had three or four times as many as I had, first I didn't have the money to bring them all and the second place was that some of them were not really in condition to travel and make a contribution on the other end, but I had some to show that we've been doing this a long time. A long time. (Applause) And to have this recognition come to us at this age is – it's worth it. And I hope that we can get the message over to the young people that they must not let things discourage them. They must not pick the wrong models. And that's what many of them are doing. They just go out and find the ones where they're having a lot of fun – somebody whose personality seems to strike them. And they let them take over their lives and they don't have to think about it, you know, just what are we going to do tonight – and they're the wrong people. So when we say we must have role models, I always want to add we want to have good role models. You have to have some people who've been around a while and who've had a chance to experiment with their value system and with their lives who can help give some guidance but you can't give it to them if they're not there.

I have recently had two or three engagements when I said I will not

charge my lecture fee if you will make the admission price to whatever you're doing to bring a youth. You can't get in free unless you bring a youth. And we're not sharing our lives with young people as much as we ought to in our homes. Now I have two tickets to a number of things that's in Cleveland, cultural events, season tickets, at the symphony, and the ballet, and the opera and the playhouse and so forth, and I use them so I can take another person who might not go otherwise. And then they can help me with my wheelchair, too. (Laughter) Okay let me say just one word about Ruth Hill and Brother Blue. I wish you had the chance to get to know him as I do, but she is absolutely the one thread that goes through this whole exhibit and all of the records that are being disseminated to various libraries. If it hadn't been for her and for her ability to scrutinize and evaluate and present so that she could get the support she needed we wouldn't have this. And I hope that your work tomorrow and the next few days is gonna be a tremendous start in another community. We need what you will have and I wish I could stay for the next few days but I can't. Thank you all for coming (Applause)

JEANNE DREIFUS: I would like to pay a tribute to Dr. Zelma George. Through an experience we had in Boston I invited her to be a participant in some of the programs that we

were having in Boston. It was at the Public Library. We brought students in from various schools. Now one of the days that she was there we brought in high school students. Now what do you expect of high school students? (Laughter) Well Zelma talked to them and also Etta Moulton Barnett talked to them. They asked lots of questions. Then when it was over, they came to me and said, "Do you think they'll let us have our pictures taken with them?" (Laughter) So you know they impressed them.

DR. HUGH MORGAN HILL: I want to say something to you. This is very important. Now and then in life - I hope you don't mind - I haven't got time to play these rules of polites so I'm going to speak truth. It's not often in life you see before you a great person. Now people will pick role models for . . . . Now do you know what a hologram is? They say that you can take a picture and reveal in that small thing a portion of the body of the whole quality of a person. Now people have consistency, but if you see an oak tree you can see leaves.

Now if you you ask me what advice can I give you to see. With your eyes, look at this person, understand? If possible, hear their breath. It's all there. See, life has consistency. Here's a great lady. See, I've had a chance to meet some of you. When she stands up, stare. If you get that quality, you do pretty good. Cause you can't lie. That's integrity. She has

integrity. When she eats a meal, everything she does. Look at her, and you get an idea of how a person behaves when they know that they are a lantern. That woman's a lantern. I heard her do something – I tell you something – you can't look at her and be.

Be sure to look at her life. Study her life. I happen to be from Cleveland. I'm going to tell you something very deep, folks. I was born in Cleveland. You know how in England you have the Royal Family? Now in Cleveland there was a royal family, Black. From the time I was a little boy, I knew about the Georges. Great people. Her career, if you can look in front, is something. So, when are you. leaving? What time, tomorrow?

DR. ZELMA GEORGE: Tomorrow.

DR. HUGH MORGAN HILL: Oh, what time tomorrow?

DR. ZELMA GEORGE: Sometime in the afternoon, I don't know.

DR. HUGH MORGAN HILL: Well, look at her, please do, because it's one of the secrets of life. Look at her, and as you look at her, try to pick up, you can get it, something about her quality, of behavior, her mind, her thought, her soul. Course, you can get it. My last thing – that's why, in some places in the world, I mention India, they speak of something called Darshaw. You come in the presence of a great person, if you can get there, you can percieve how they look and listen,

they do, and you become kind of like that. Of course, she is an example, the embodiment, the incarnation of a principle called integrity, truth, great beauty, fabulous talent and mind, and she is rather heroic. Every time I see her – I hope she doesn't mind – I have to express my thanks to her, what she means, she and her husband, and Cleveland. And because of her, we stand straighter in Cleveland. We try to do things, because she's like a great, great star. Now, that's all I'm going to say, now I really believe in her, she's a very beautiful, beautiful, lady. (Applause)

WOMEN OF COURAGE ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE, NOVEMBER 15--17, 1987. MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE.

NOVEMBER 16, 1987: 9:00 A.M. "HOW TO BE AN ORAL HISTORIAN." INTRODUCTION BY DEAN DELANO BLACK. PRESENTATIONS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY; DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON, JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY; DR. JOHNYE E. STRICKLAND, UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK. TRANSCRIPTION BY J. DOUGLAS SIMS.

DR. DELANO BLACK: We are glad to have you here. We have waited just a little bit to see if there were others who are still searching for parking places and then further trying to get across the campus via our aqueducts that we use as sidewalks. When our engineers constructed these wonderful facilities they didn't seem to think that it was ever going to rain and they made them low and level with the ground so that the mowers could just mow right over them. They didn't think about the fact that when it does rain it makes an absolute tunnel to drain the water off and over your shoetops. We apologize for that.

We are very pleased to have you here on behalf of Memphis State University and the College of Arts and Sciences and I should say the College of Communication and Fine Arts because they are very involved in this whole process in that they are hosting the exhibit of this fabulous fifty-two to fifty-five photographs of the Women of Courage which was originated at the Schlesinger Library in Cambridge at Radcliffe College.

We are further very honored to have with us this morning the woman who was responsible for putting this oral history project together at the Schlesinger and helping select the women who are represented in this fine exhibit. Ruth Edmonds Hill. And she spoke yesterday at the opening of the gallery. I hope you were there and had a chance to hear Dr. Ruth Hill. But you will have a chance to hear her tomorrow at noon in the closing session for this conference. We want to make sure that we recognize the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Tennessee Humanities Council, and the Memphis State University Academic Enrichment Fund for funding this program and at this time I would like to present Dr. Charles Crawford. Dr. Crawford is member of the faculty in the History Department here at Memphis State University and his primary responsibilities are in oral history and local history and he does a fabulous job collecting those. He will take the honors of introducing our two distinguished guests from Little Rock, Arkansas, and from Jackson, Mississippi, who will be speaking to you during the Oral History Conference. Again, welcome to Memphis State and I think we are going to have a very profitable and exciting day-and-a-half.

DR. CHARLES CRAWFORD: Thank you, Dean Black. I am, as some of you know, Charles Crawford. I am a trained

historian, although, when I started oral history work, I knew nothing of it. Of course, that was a few years ago. The University Oral History Research Office was opened in 1967 and as a beginning historian with responsibilites for Tennessee and Memphis history, but who had never heard of oral history, when Memphis State University under the leadership of then-president Cecil Humphreys decided to establish an oral history office, it required some learning. I found out at the time that it was not neccessary to take classes. They would have helped, had they been available, and I wished I had had some. It was possible to learn in the practical form, simply by going to people who knew how to do it, by talking with them, by making notes, by studying their programs, by getting my questions answered.

The first part of beginning our program was considerable travel on my part getting to a number of universities and institutions where oral history had been started and learning by the way it was done by other people. At that time, that was about the only way you could learn. And what we have available today, and tomorrow, is essentially learning in that form, except in this case, the people who are able to explain I think everything we need to know about oral history and answer other questions as we ask them are ones who have learned in a practical sense. I know

both of them well. Both have been active and have held positions in the national Oral History Association. They are respected in their fields. They are women who know oral history and I do not believe we could have a better way to learn about it.

During the last two decades, Memphis State, as one of the less-publicized activities, has developed one of the largest general-purpose oral history collections in the south. We have oral history or life memoir accounts of more than two thousand people in many different areas: men, women, black, white, young, old, on subjects of political, economic, religious, social, and intellectual significance. Generally ,we have tried to deal with history in this area although we have not hesitated to deal with some projects that reach beyond the boundaries of what we refer, rather informally, to as the Mid-South. During this time, we have acquired certain facilites in terms of machinery and transcription ability, not to mention experience in dealing with oral history matters.

This conference was put together, as was told to the guests last night, when we saw what had been done at Radcliffe. How they had undertaken the projects of selecting Black Women of Courage, that is, achievement, accomplishment, endurance in the face of difficulty, and conducting oral history interviews with them about their life experiences,

collecting also some splendid photographs which have been placed in a travelling exhibit and which, of course, we are fortunate enough to have now.

We are interested at this point mainly in the oral history interviews – collecting the life stories and experiences of women, particularly of Black women, and especially significantly, in our own area of Memphis and the Mid-South. That is the purpose of this Oral History Conference, to enable those who wish to learn how to do it and to learn how to do it from people who have a great deal of practical experience. Both of our program leaders have interviewed men and women. Both are particulary aware of the need of accounts in women's history and of the lack of sources in Black History, and those problems are going to be addressed in our conference.

Now as for how this all developed, allow me to explain just a moment the beginning of oral history. All history was, at one time, oral history, because reading and writing, and certainly printing, came late in the human experience. The collective wisdom of human beings – the triumphs, the mistakes, the practical ways of doing things, the existence and activities of parents and ancestors, all had to be passed down in oral form. And the human mind is capable first of learning in this sense rather than in the written word, and this ability has never been lost. This

collective account of the past was perpetuated and was shared from generation to generation by women and by men who told each succeeding generation and thus passed on the accumulation of wisdom. Now with the invention of printing and the development of reading and writing first, it became possible to record, so that things would remain without change from generation to generation. This was essentially the advantage of written history over the first oral history, and the accounts that we attach significance to in the history of western civilization.

Such things as the accounts of Homer, Thucydides, and Herodotus, were collected first by the oral history method. That is, by talking to people who were there or who took part in things. Later, however, the results were written. So we have the written record to preserve the oral gathering of information. As time passed, history tended to undergo some changes. It tended to become especially and virtually exclusively written history. If it wasn't written, it wasn't considered to be history. Furthermore, a process developed where history moved in an elitist direction. That is, the history of ordinary people, their triumphs, their endurance, their sufferings, were generally passed over and a few things were recorded – the existence and the glories of kings and priests and generals, military leaders, occasionally an explorer or an adventurer, and

these, you see, were almost all men and usually were from the dominant group in any culture. Thus history, as it went through written form, became more and more limited.

Now in the twentieth century, it became possible to undertake some changes, and Ruth Edmonds Hill told us about the pioneering work of Alan Nevins at Columbia University in 1948, who is known as the person who developed oral history. Starting before the invention of the tape recorder and then continuing after, he developed the practice of collecting oral accounts. From there, from the beginning at Columbia University, it spread to other universities, including Radcliffe and to Memphis State, although late in the process.

It also was adopted by Presidential Libraries and various professional groups around the nation. It had such obvious merit that oral history practice developed and spread widely in the United States, and now I can assure you that, not because of the promotion of anyone, but simply because it is a method that works, it is world-wide. Oral history is practiced in Australia. It is practiced extensively in Africa, where many of the nations are fairly new. It is practiced in Latin America. It is practiced in Canada and in Asia. It is something that had to wait for twentieth century technology to develop.

As Ruth Hill pointed out last night, in the old interview technique of going to people and asking them what happened in a given battle or lifestyle or political campaign, it was neccessary to talk to them. Then, the person doing the interviewing had to have a tremendous memory or had to write as fast as possible, and even then a great deal was lost. Of course, Dr. Nevins started with a fast-writing graduate student in place of a recorder, but even that didn't do the job. A great deal was lost. Then with the invention of what today we regard a simple machine, the magnetic tape recorder, it became possible to recover oral history information with absolute fidelity, that is, word for word, verbatim. And in the words, the nuances, the tone, the actual voice, of the people who described the things that they knew.

Now this opened new possibilities and basically this is the invention from which oral history has developed. There is nothing magic about it and there is little new about it, except the technology, and the techniques that have been refined a bit as time went on, but many of them were doubtless practiced earlier.

And in the typical oral history interview, you have three participants. You have the interviewer, the person who is searching for information. You have secondly, the subject or interviewee, the person who knows

something, sometimes an older person, but not necessarily and not always, but a person who knows something that is worth recovering. The third participant always in an oral history interview is the the tape recorder, which is doing the work of faithfully, accurately recording, and if you handle it correctly, not malfunctioning, stopping running, missing words or getting inaudible copy.

Those are things that are technical and you have to watch for, and I have had mistakes with them and I am sure sure that Drs. Strickland and Harrison must have had a few experiences too. In other words, this is something that is technical and you have to learn how to do it. You have to practice, you have to be experienced, you have to be alert, and not let mistakes happen.

But when an oral history interview is done well, you have what people know. And this is very important because we deal with people. They can be your parents, they can be your grandparents. They can be older relatives. It can be on a broader scale – retired presidents or military leaders or people of great significance in any activity, but it does involve people who have something worth knowing.

A great deal of what people know in any case, even the most public of figures, is never put down. There are many reasons for it, and I won't go

into them now. Some of them are electronic communication. You telephone. Some of them are that you deal with brief and official memos. There is not much in the way of extensive diary keeping or autobiographical writing any more. Nor do people correspond a great about the real things to them, their lives and what they feel and what they think and what they experience. Mostly that is not recorded. But when you find someone who does know, who does have these things worth recovering, you can get them. And you can do it with a great deal of fidelity.

And you see, the importance of it is this. The people you talk to will die. That is something you usully deal with in projects. You're dealing with older people. Sometimes you start with a given number of interviewees and some of them are gone before you can get to them. In the History of the Tennesee Valley Authority project which I directed, we lost, I believe, about five percent of the people in it. Now we were dealing with retired people, of course, people of advanced age, generally who started and thus were adults with the Tennessee Valley Authority close to the year 1933. So by the time we started interviewing, they were beginning to disappear. That is true of other subjects, too. Other projects we have been in and of the ones we have interviewed, some have been literally salvage archeology. We have conducted interviews and within a

month or a few months they would be gone.

However, the glory of it is this. Even though they are gone, their memories remain. In their own words, verbatim, recorded on tape, and they will be there for the use we choose to make of them, which in our case is basically maintenance as part of the permanent historical collection at Memphis State. Thus, they will be there a hundred years from now, two centuries, three centuries, we hope many. So long as this institution and its archives shall stand, their lives in their words are preserved.

Now this is useful for various things, for preparing books, theses, dissertations, professional papers, radio and television programs, or simply for understanding the past. Also sometimes, it has some personal and sentimental value. We hear from people whose life stories we have collected. We hear from their relatives, children, spouses, or others. After they have gone, they want to have the record. We invariably give it to them, of the person speaking in his or her own voice, and that is something as treasured as a photograph or letters or the other things that people have. Sometimes more, because it is the person talking and explaining their own life story.

So, this is basically what oral history is, what can be done with it. It

is not, I assure you, too complicated. There are a few very strong rules about integrity, the collection of truth, which is the purpose of any historian, about adequate preparation before you undertake oral history work. These things are ones that can be handled. And our two program leaders, Dr. Alferdteen Harrison, from Jackson State University whose biography you have on your program, and Dr. Johnye Strickland, whose biography you also have, will direct the program. I would like for them, at this time, to stand. You will be meeting them in a moment. (Pause) Thank you. You will certainly have adequate opportunity to ask them questions, to gather information from them. [Presentation of speakers]

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: "What is oral history?" Now I'll guess I'll go ahead and give my little spiel, what I think oral hisory is. And technically it's a method of gathering and preserving historical information in a spoken form. And it encourages us to produce accurate information and to use oral history to recognize certain principles, rights, and obligations for those of us who create it as a source material that is authentic and can be used by scholars in the future. Now I know that's a whole lot, that's a mouthful but I think that what it really says is that the oral historian has a great deal of responsibility in a technical sense for those of us who seek to set up formal oral history

programs to really create documents for future scholars.

But I know many of you have said that you have very personal reasons for getting involved in oral history. My hope is that those of us who sponsor oral history programs will encourage scholars who use oral history for their personal reasons and other persons to do it in such a manner so that it can be used by future generations. Because a lot of people do oral history for their books and dissertations and then they just keep it right there in their homes or let it go to waste or erase it or something and it really should be preserved. So I think that if those persons who are doing it for very personal reasons would consider that you really could do a service for future scholars by preserving it. Then we would be into something that will help to document and preserve your perspective on issues and the kinds of questions that you ask for future people so they'll understand, you know, what this generation was about in terms of oral history.

Johnye, I have a lot of other things here like filling in the gaps, missing stories completely. Dr. Crawford referred to those groups of people who have been left out. Particularly women, you know, have been left out of the historical record so that gap can be filled through oral history.

Most ethnic groups, minority groups particularly, Blacks and Indians, have been left out, and a student pointed out to me one day that, "Dr. Harrison, there's nothing in the book about Indians." I said, "Yes, but whose story is it, you know, and what does it really say about the Indian. Does it tell what the Indian would like to have told about themselves, does it really tell what they're really about? Or does it give someone else's biased perspective on the Indian?

And the same for Blacks, I think it's very important that oral history projects be undertaken by ethnic and minority groups so that their perspective on what occurred and what happened to them is presented. I feel that very strongly about Blacks and Indians.

I guess one of the best examples is that about the oral history that the Jews are doing of the Holocaust. And how they reacted to what occured gives you a more moving feeling about the detriment that was done than the regular accounts that we read in the world history books about what occurred.

VOICE IN AUDIENCE: Having grown up in the McCarthy era, I would be interested in knowing the legal thing. Could you look at that?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes ma'am, I think we deal with the legal

question in the second session. There are a series of questions that were given to us and I think it's sort of in your guideline. I believe there are some questions there of what we deal with in each session, is that not the case? Yes, so that's sort of what we're following here. So that's on your... Is it not on the program? I thought I saw it.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: It is, yes.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Do you see the topics for 9:30? So we'll just sort of follow that. We thought that that would be the best way to that. So we'll get down to that, if you can hold your interest. [Voice from audience speaks, and agrees to wait.] So, anyway, I think I was about finished with that point. Dr. Strickland, do you want to add something?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: What are we on?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I was still talking about what oral history is.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Oh, what it is, good.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: And the uses.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Yes, I want to address this: "How to be an Oral Historian." It says somewhere that

somebody was going to tell us that, at least in the original thing that came. Well, I want to give you some practical information. You need to learn to love dogs, if you don't already. I shall never forget Brutus. I went for my first official project to Tucson, Arizona, and I had been told by a librarian that, you know, this woman was the granddaughter of the woman I was doing research on, to collect the information for whatever future scholars wanted to use it. So I went out to talk to this granddaughter, and the door opened, and there was this gigantic St. Bernard. And I said, "Oh my goodness. Aren't you... nice?" and he lunged through the kitchen and she had to restrain him.

If you're afraid of dogs, you might as well forget it. You've got to learn to love dogs because the dog belongs there. Sometimes they eat the microphone. I had one sit on the microphone. Dr. Crawford had one eat a microphone, I understand.

But, you know, if your face belies the fact that you don't really enjoy the company of this animal the owner is going to know, and you have lost your rapport, you've lost your credibility. He may take the dog out, but he's suspicious of you. So learn to like dogs. In the South, you'd better learn to drink Cokes. In the summer, you're going to be offered a Coke, and if you don't like Cokes, the best thing to do is say, "I'm sorry, I have a real

problem with sugar. Could I have a glass of water!" That will get you by. But otherwise, you just don't refuse the Coke!

I had to teach some of my freshman students this one time, or my young students who were going out, because that sort of puts off the little old lady who asks you if you'd like to have one. The third thing is, get a shoulder bag. If you're a woman, get a shoulder purse, or a backpack or something, and some shoes that you sprint from one end of the Atlanta airport to the other in twenty minutes to catch your plane, carrying a tape recorder, maybe a camera, and whatever luggage you want. It has to be carry-on because you don't have time to reclaim you luggage from someplace else.

It took me a year or so to learn all of these things but after losing your luggage one time, if you get to where you're going, and you've paid a thousand dollars for your ticket and you have no tape recorder, or your tape is in Timbuktu somewhere because it got sent to the wrong place you learn to carry it with you.

And the fourth thing is appreciate gossip. We have a scholar (laughter) who has written a book recently about gossip so that we now have a different appreciation of it in English circles. She is a literature scholar. That's exactly what Herodotus was doing when he was walking

around interviewing people. And Herodotus, bless his heart, told both sides of the gossip, if he had different pieces of it, so we have a different point of view. The other person, Thucydides, decided which one was correct, so he left out the other, but Herodotus is far more interesting to read, from a literary perspective. The historians claim that Thucydides is probably more accurate. But at any rate, you have to pretend that you appreciate this while you're there getting it. A historian, or whoever uses the material eventually, will have to sort through it, sift through, and determine which sounds like it might be factual and which sounds like just something kind of snippy about the neighbors or about the family member. Or, something that is an attitude of that person rather than necessarily the true picture. But you have to still show an interest, or you're going to lose your rapport. So, you know, if you have all of your life been taught not to gossip and not to listen to gossip, well, you don't carry it back and forth, you don't exchange it. But you have to show an interest as though, you know, this is the most exciting piece of information you've ever had in you life, because if you turn the person off there, then you're going to loose what's really important that you could get from that person later.

And it doesn't matter if the person doesn't even speak your language. I interviewed a whole bunch of Vietnamese refugees and we had to use

interpreters and, whatever we asked the refugee, the interpreter had to translate our questions and then that person, that refugee, would look directly at me so I had to listen and I had to respond with the appropriate facial expressions, so that if it was a sad story, you know, I had to look sad or if it was funny, I had to grin or laugh or something. Because, he was not talking to this person sitting here - the interpreter - that's not an important person to him. You, as the interviewer, are the important person. So you have to learn to be genuinely interested. And it doesn't take long. You really do get sort of entranced by what goes on. Is that right?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Did I state that [right?]

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Because some people will say, "Do you understand what I mean? Have you had an experience like this?" or "Is this what you want to know?" See, because you give them a cue that you're not really listening and this is not what you want to know.

They'll stop and they'll say, "Well, if this isn't what you want to know, will you ask me some more questions." When sometimes maybe what they're telling you is more important than what you had asked if you let

the interviewer inform you, if you give them the slightest clue that this is not what you want, they really will clam up and then you will have to just pull it out. Pull, piece by piece, and that's really not a good interview if you have to ask all the questions. And what you've done is somehow or another given them an unconscious signal that they're not telling you what you want to know. And older people are very sensitive about sort of pleasing you. You want to be sensitive about pleasing them, but you'll find that they really want to give you what you want to know.

So if you get it flowing, like she said, you've got to keep letting them tell you that. And there have been many times when I really did not understand what somebody was telling me because I had not had that experience and it was difficult for me to ask the next question. So I made sure that I kept saying, "Yes, yes. That is very interesting, very important. How did you feel?" You know, so that they would keep talking and I could begin to understand. And so one time somebody said, "Maybe that's to your advantage because if you really understand too much about what they're telling you or if you pretend to understand too much, then a lot of things are left unsaid." And later when you go back and you read that interview, you find that what you had in your mind was really never said on the tape. And that's where you you want to have them say what they felt and what

they were thinking. So that unconscious communication is very, very important in terms of the interviewing.

Perhaps we should move on to, you know, how do you get started? I know that you all have your own particular ways that you're going to use oral history. How you get started is really with an interest. You have to be interested in something, something you want to do or, like the ladies say, just being nosy or curious about things. You have to focus it. I don't think you want to start, you say, "Well, oral history, this sounds like something good. I want to do an oral history project."

I think you need a topic, something that you can put your teeth into. I would also say, in getting started, if you are conscious, lets say, that the community history is going down the drain and it's not being documented or your family history is not being documented and you really want to do something about it, the first place to start is where you are today. Learn what oral history is all about. There are a number of sources to read. I brought some of these things. Being a teacher, I always have to have some things that I pass around and carry, so I'll pass these around and let you look at them and not have you take a lot of time with this. I'd like to recommend this little book, Willa Baum's book, Oral History for the Local Historical Society. There are some others that have been done that are

very good, but this is a simple one. Maybe Johnye can give you some other sources, but let me go ahead and pass around some of these journals, The Oral History Review, The Oral History Association, and I forgot to bring the membership cards. I had them all typed and they're on the desk in my office. You might want to just look at this and become familiar with what the professional oral historians are doing. I'll pass these around, and you have a bibliography in your registration packs. This is a small bibliography. I had a larger one but I couldn't get it in my pack to bring so I didn't bring it. I'll just go ahead and pass this around so you can sort of get a little bird's eye view. And this bibliography you can look at before you leave. Dr. Crawford was talking about oral history being international. I brought along the International Journal of Oral History to show you how international it is and that people really are getting a lot of things done. I guess I can pass this one around as well.

And then, while I'm talking, before Johnye starts to talk, I'd like to just say that, for my own personal use of oral history, I've done several things. First of all, I was asked when I came home from college, well, with a Ph.D.. And this organization wanted to write their history, and the Grand Master of the Masons approached me and he said, "I understand that you write history. And we want you to write our history."

And I said, "Yes, I do."

He said, "Would you consider working with us?" and so I thought, "Well this would be really nice." It's something my mother had been associated with but I hadn't really.

So he said, "Come down and we'll talk one day."

So I went down. I was going down to look at their library and their records, and I went in, we talked, and he got me interested, and I said, "Well let me see your archives."

He said, "We don't have one. That's why we hired you."

And I said, "Where are your books and whatever."

He said, "We don't have any here. Otherwise, we'd have hired some of those other guys out there." He said, "We understood that you could talk to people and write the history down."

I said, "Yes, but I have to have something to start with."

He said, "Well, tell us what you need." I thought I was telling him but he didn't understand. They did not have an office where they had kept any records that I could look at. Plus they are an organization, they say, with secrets. They say they are not a secret society but an organization with secrets. But yet I'm supposed to write this history.

So I went back and I thought about it. You see I'd already committed

myself. I thought, you know, I'll see the archives and everything, so what I really did was to tell him the kinds of people that I needed to talk to and in that way, over a period of three or four years, with their assistance, I put together a book on the history of Masonry in Mississippi.

And let me just tell you the story of this one very quickly. I went to this school called Piney Woods School. And I went back after I had come from college, well, with a Ph.D. and all, and the school was just like it was in the 1950's. And I thought this is really unusual. And I wanted to know why they had survived the way the did and how they had lived through the 1960's, untouched, at Piney Woods. So I asked the president, who was then living. He was 90 years old, if I could talk to him and talk to some of the people there, and record it and I explained to him about oral history and everything.

He said, "Well sure, that would be very nice. We'd like to have one of our graduates do this." And so I began to talk to them, just asking those kinds of questions, "Why had they survived the sixties without being touched?" Well his basic answer of course was work and, you know, they didn't believe in a lot of things that were going on and all, but anyway, that resulted in this book, called Piney Woods, an Oral History. So that's the way I have used oral history. And the other major project that I've

done is to document the Farris Street Historic District in Jackson, Mississippi, which is the oldest black neighborhood in Jackson. I know you have an old black neighborhood here in Memphis and I know some oral history projects have been done to that but what we did not have were any records, you know, the place was listed on the national register but nobody knew anything beyond what was stated in that document. We didn't know about the specific blacks and people did not really know the importance of the neighborhood. So we had an oral history project that culminated into this particular project.

And I'll pass around some of these brochures and if you're really interested you can take a couple of these and at this point, I'll let you ask any questions you want about this. This tells you not only what oral history is but some of the uses that you can make of oral history. Just pass those along. This is a listing of the oral histories that we did there. And I could not put in my suitcase here again [enough for everyone] If you are really interested, you, as I say, can keep one of those, but I didn't bring along enough for everbody, I just brought along enough for examples. So the technical way of getting started, we can deal with if you're more interested later. Johnye?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I too had a box of books, but it was pouring

rain when I got out of the car this morning, and I left them in the car. We're going to have a living room this afternoon from four to five and I thought perhaps by that time I could get them out and show them to you and I did bring interviews. I brought transcripts and I brought index versions so that you can see the differences in the two. Don't carry them away, they're the only copies I have at the moment, but they will at least be available to you. I don't have any books. I can't do it without the books in hand so I'll do that for you before five this afternoon. But these are excellent sources. They're the very ones that I used when I started out and the guidelines... the evaluation guidelines, well, I'm going to let you talk about that, (Laughter) because you're the historian. See, I'm sort of on the fringe area, I teach English and Literature. I do interviews on all sorts of subjects.

I too started several projects. Since I didn't know quite as much about sources to go to for historical research, I wasn't quite as shocked as Alferdteen was when she was looking for their archives and their documentation. But I started with a project on Women in Arkansas Politics when I was asked by a political science colleague to write the chapter on Arkansas for a reader he was doing on Women in the New Southern Politics. He explained to me that the "New Southern" started

after the Civil War. So I thought, "Oh well, you know, that will take me five minutes to do that.

I have three degrees from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, not the one where I teach. And I have minor in history all the way through the master's degree, and I even had to take history courses for my Ph.D., and it was at that point in my life and at the time that the women's movement was very big, in about '71, that I discovered that Arkansas had elected the first woman to the United States Senate. And that fact utterly amazed me and then I discovered that not only that, but Arkansas was one of only – as late as 1975 – it was one of only three states who had had as many as four women in the National Congress. And that just absolutely blew my mind! So then I thought well, you know, there is this project and I will start with that and we'll have all these wonderful records like the Senate papers and such things. So then I began looking. her name was Hattie Carraway. By the way, I began looking for Mrs. Carraway's papers, and I'm still looking.

That was about 1971 or -2 or -3. I still cannot believe that they've been destroyed because her husband's nephew was in charge of the Senate all the office buildings at one time, and he never heard what happened to them. Her son doesn't know what happened to them. It's just the process

was that unless they made some plan to have them given to an archive somewhere, eventually they would be burned. There's no record of their ever having been burned, so I think the mice are still chewing on them somewhere in the attic of one of the old Senate buildings. But at any rate, there was no documentation. I went, as Ruth Hill suggested last night, to the biographical dictionaries. I found a paragraph. It spelled her name wrong. And gave the dates wrong, and I thought, "That's not going to help a whole lot." So then I began talking to people, and it was about the same time that I learned about oral history. And I decided, "Well, this would probably be a good way to a good place to start collecting information." I didn't have time to learn very much about politics or the Senate other than what I already knew, at that point, because it was so far from the1930's that the people that had known her and worked with her and family members, older ones who had known her personally, were getting over the hill and might not have memories or they might have a stroke or, they might die.

And many of the interviews I did for that project, have died, subsequently, even John L. McClellan, Senator McClellan , one of the major sources, and Brooks Hays and all of the people who had served in the Congress with her from Arkansas. So that's why I just went and began, and

I didn't even know what questions to ask to begin with. I would learn something from each interview and then could build that into the next subject and if I could start all over again. Every oral historian I know has said, by the time they finish the project they know enough that if they could start the project from that point they would have a lot more and a lot better information. Unfortunately, that's the way it generally is with a project, isn't it?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes. (Laughter)

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: By the time you're through, you know enough to begin.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I think that's the way it is with a lot of things. You learn from experience. And we don't want to say a lot of things that will get you feeling inadequate. Because when I started doing oral history interviews, actually I was at the University of Kansas starting to do this because I saw the need to tell the Black history from a different perspective. It was in the sixties and we [at] the University of Kansas just didn't have anything on Blacks, in Kansas or anyplace else, you know, except the elite people like DuBois, and Margaret Walker. They had a couple of her books and stuff like that. But the real history of how people lived and survived from day to day was not

there.

Neither was it there for many Whites, too, but we were Blacks and interested. And since we were setting up Black studies classes, we made a required component of our Black studies class was that each student had to interview somebody in the black community about a part of their history, their experience, some older person. If I were doing it now, I'd do it a little differently, but at that time we just left it very loose, that they had to learn something from the elders in the community. And that was our thing. And those interviews are there at the University of Kansas now and they're useful, I'm told, for people who want to understand things about the Garvery Movement. People told us about these things, you see, because they had lived this experience and really what it was like and how much the sixties were sort of going back to that. And so they sort of verified the fact that we were really on to something that was very good and so the University of Kansas supported the effort. But we do want to give you some specific information here and I noticed that one of these questions is how to plan a project. And I wrote down a few things that you might want to go through and Willa Baum's book tells you to start with a local group if somebody's already organized, let's say if you are a library, though I would suggest that you would start with an advisory committee

who would have the same kind of focus that you would have. I think you need to say whether you're going to document local history, whether you're going to deal with women or even men, or just an ethnic group, or maybe your project could be dealing with the rearing of children. There are a lot of interesting questions that can be asked.

[End of tape 2.]

WOMEN OF COURAGE ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE, NOVEMBER 15-17, 1987
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE.

NOVEMBER 16, 1987:10:45 A.M. "ETHICAL, LEGAL AND TECHNICAL MATTERS."
DISCUSSION BY DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON, JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY
AND DR. JOHNYE E. STRICKLAND, UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK.
TRANSCRIPTION BY J. DOUGLAS SIMS.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Dr. Harrison has just said I can start so she can back up what I say. We have come to the session that says we are going to do legal business. But we also have come to the role of the group sponsoring the project. I asked Dr. Crawford how he interpreted that point, and he said if it is not an individual doing the project for him or herself it is whoever that group is that is sponsoring. So, I said, "Oh. well that's what I would have said too."

It seems to me that the group who's going to do a project is obligated to at least work with some expertise, get as much expert advice as you can, but to plan the parameters of the project. What is your purpose, what do you hope to gain by doing this project, and what are you going to do with the interviews after you have collected them? Because you have to have that fully understood before you even know what kinds of questions to ask or what kinds of interviewees to select so and of course you can do almost anything.

Let me tell you briefly about one project that was well organized by

the group itself. They came to me for assistance and I gave them over a hundred hours. I intended to spend two or three. They were so persistent, and they would come back with genuine problems that I could assist them with so they did a good project. And you will see the total interviews that were collected from that project this afternoon from four to five. It's the CCC project, the Civilian Conservation Corps. Three men in Arkansas who were in their eighties who had been in the CCC during the thirties knew that the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Corps was coming up. Nationwide they belonged to an alumni association had been formed, and they belonged to it and local groups had been formed so that there would be some kind of big push to do something, to memorialize the event. And nationally they had decided to try to get funding for a museum to house artifacts and memorabilia which is a wonderful idea.

And there were enough of them scattered all over the nation you know and by now many of them are bank presidents or at least have some kind of influence and there were a lot of senators and representatives who represent them so they wanted to use this as an opportunity to make a statement about positive things that can be done for youth. They were not pleased with what had happened with the Job Corps exactly and certainly

not with all the juvenile delinquincy you know that we have been hearing so much about. So they used that as a moral or ethical basis for their project as well.

And in Arkansas these three men who were officers of the Arkansas CCC group decided that Arkansas' contribution would be to do an oral history. I don't know where they found out about oral history, but they did. At any rate, one of the men worked in the State Health Department. I think he was a night janitor or night watchman or something at the time. And the man who was the Director of the State Health Department happened to be one of the board members on the Arkansas Endowment for the Humanities. And he may have been the one who suggested the oral history. But, at any rate, he suggested they try for a grant from the Arkansas Endowment. And any time you do that and mention the word "oral history" they send you to one of about three people and I'm one of them. I happened to be the closest one so they got to me first. (Laughter)

And I was intrigued. They knew what they wanted to do and they wanted to collect memorabilia and to do that they had to get the whole group, all the Arkansas alumni, interested in bringing the letters and the photographs that they had taken, you know what they had left, their

diaries, if anything. And every camp had made a scrapbook and each boy had been given a scrapbook while he was there that had, you know, pictures of the camp and pictures of the whole state, I think, of Arkansas. I didn't even know – we didn't even know – the scrapbooks existed, because nobody has ever studied the CCC in Arkansas.

But anyway, they sent out a questionnaire. They decided to have a reunion in Arkansas the year before the national reunion to get their act together, and they got a list of the alumni and they sent letters to these people inviting them to this first reunion and publicizing their fundraising for the museum and the collection of memorabilia and then they made out a questionnaire which they sent. I brought a copy of their questionnaire. They simply asked: "What is your name? when did you go in the CCC? what camp were you assigned to? what was your job there? what have you done since then, you know, with your life? where do you live now? and what is your occupation? that kind of thing of thing."

And from that list, they had a lot of responses from it. And from that list they had already done their selections, they knew who their interviewees would be. They had selected people from every corner, every section of the state, geographically. So they had a representative

selection. They had at least one person from each of the camps in the state on their list. And they had different occupations represented at the camps, and different socio-economic levels. They were very careful to have already structured all this and they came to me for help with getting the grant.

They couldn't add figures and they couldn't write a budget, so I finally had to write the budget page for them. Fortunately, if you work with an institution such as an academic institution in Arkansas, I don't know what Tennessee or Mississippi or other states do, but they allow us to give compensatory time at the rate that our salaries would be for a day. So, if I spend several hours, you know, working with them as a volunteer, that's a whole bunch of money, because we get paid something like $250 dollars a day that the federal government allows on grant proposals. And then if we do something in our office if we keep the records there, then we get to charge them for the electricity and, you know, the telephone, and all of this stuff. There is a formula and it's a lot of money, so that you can have all that, you have to have matching funds if you get a grant from a lot of places. So you have all this matching funds, you know, without any actual money having to be put out, so that's one of the reasons you need to have a

sponsoring group.

A church can do it, and the time that volunteers spend, you can give them at least minimum wage and if they have a job and they are paid X number of dollars, per day or per hour, you can prorate the amount of time they spend that way for your matching funds, matching time. But, at any rate, these CCC people did this.

The people who came for that first reunion, they invited us, they even persuaded one of the Roosevelt sons, or grandsons I suppose it was, to come and address them there. And give them legitimacy and popularity so the media covered it, and they had a number of those people that were there, proposed interviewees, were there that day who had spent their own money to come. And I arranged to have volunteer interviewers. I got several people who were praticing journalists, some graduate students at the University, and a lot of my colleagues who had done interviews, projects of one sort or another. I think there were at least twelve of us, and we went to the conference and gave our time, and all of this, you know, helped them get a subsequent grant for transcription. We did twenty-two interviews on that day. And we didn't plan for photographs or anything, but the wives of these CCC men took a little 110 camera, which is about as

tiny as you can get and color film, and they made a snapshot of each of the interviewees. That's all we had to work with, so they had promised to bring me the scrapbook with real photographs in it, so that I could use that to make a slide show for them to show at one of their meetings or the state reunion the next year or something.

The scrapbook managed to get to the museum. They did get the money for the museum, by the way, so all the records have kind of disappeared except our tapes. But I did a demonstration interview and taught about fifteen of the CCC men themselves how to do the interview. They made the questionaire that they thought would be most effective, based on my presentation of interview. And, at any rate, there is a successful project there.

And you have to get release forms signed and you have to let everybody know what's going to be done with all this material ahead of time, and Dr. Harrison is going to tell you (Laughter) some of this, and then I'll chip in.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Let's see. We're down to the legal concerns? Obligations of the persons to be interviewed?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Well basically we asked, "When did you go into the service and where were you stationed and what was you job there and then just tell us something about your experience and they would pick out what they considered to be an interesting memory, you know. And then what have you done since then. Those were the basic things. We also asked them where they were born and who their parents were, for just basic biographical information. Now we're going to get legal. That's the fun part.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Well it's really not a big deal about the legal situation. You have to be concerned about slander and libel, or libel, however that's interpreted. But I try to tell students we can avoid all of that simply by operating as scholars. And giving that person that you're interviewing the utmost of respect as an individual who has rights and that you do not want to ever infringe upon these rights or take those rights into your own hand or take them for granted by assuming that because they told you the information you can do with it whatever you please. You take it as a scholar, you use it for scholarly purposes and every step of the way of use, you inform that person, just out of courtesy, what you're going to do with it. If it's going

to be put in the library you give that person the courtesy of reviewing what they have said.

This is why I believe in transcribing. So that that person can read what they have said. And often when a person sees something in print, they have a different reaction than when they have just sat down and talked to you about it and they reflect upon it. When they see it in print they can think about the implications of what they have said. And if they decide they want to take something out of that interview. We try to discourage them from taking it out unless it's a mistake. If it's an error in judgement, what I like to have them do is to correct it in a subsequent interview and then to refer to that in the footnoting of it, that this was later on corrected. But somehow or another it destroys the interview to keep documenting that particular interview.

A lot of people feel different things about that. But what I have utmost in my mind is that person's rights to the interview. The other thing, once you get past being concerned about the libel or slander of a person. See, the person who's interviewing – I mean the person that you're interviewing – could unintentionally slander someone. And I think that they have a right to take that out, to have it closed or to restate it, you

know, to set the record straight, in terms of doing that. So you have to, when you're organizing your project, be concerned about these kinds of things. See, the other reason is why I think that you should pursue community projects or significant history projects through an organization. Because they can help you monitor this and keep track of corrections and that kind of thing much better than you as an individual can do that.

What I worry about sometimes are scholars who take the information without giving that person a chance to reconsider what they have said and sometimes errors do creep into information in that way, some things that they didn't really mean to put that way. But when they hear it again or they see it in writing, they say, "Oh, I didn't say that," or, "I didn't mean to say it that way," or, "They misinterpreted me." You see in an oral history process, if it's done correctly, if you want to organized oral history project, you have to give that person a chance to reconsider what he has said.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: What she's really saying is, you don't do a hatchet job on your interviewee. You have the moral and legal and ethical responsibility to keep that person from

being sued for slander or libel. Now it's slander if you and your transcriber have hurt it. And once it's been put into written form, then it can become libel. Now I've also taken some journalism courses so I could find out what libel and slander were. And one of the things I've learned is, you cannot libel or slander a public figure. So if it's somebody who is a governor or a senator or something, they can call him an S.O.B. or various other things. They're so used to that. And you cannot libel the dead. So if it's somebody that's been dead for a long time, you don't have to worry about it. It's persons who are still living that you can have problems with.

And you can have real political and financial problems if, for example, you have an open interview, and a journalist comes, or anybody comes, and uses that and then prints something and word gets back that this was printed and the person may have money or political friends or something and they can lean on the University. They can lean on your funding agency and just be really sticky. So you don't want that to happen. You're not trying to elicit illegal events or something.

I was interviewing a Vietnam veteran one time and he was telling me these funny stories about this one guy who got marajuana or something in Vietnam. And he gave the name of the ship and the name – well, I guess he

did give the first name of the sailor. And then all of the sudden after we had finished the interview I stopped and thought about that and I thought somebody could listen to that tape and check on this person. This was during the height of those problems. He could lose his job if he happens to have a reponsible job now if somebody found out that he had ever been involved with drugs. And we have no right to do this to him and didn't mean to get him in trouble. So we literally edited the tape. I did it myself. We went together back through it. Every time we found the name of the person or the name of the ship we zapped it out so that there is no incriminating evidence there anywhere. You know that was a crime, really, that we were talking about, and we didn't mean it that way. He was telling me about a social custom that a lot of folks were involved in.

I've even known one interviewer who apparantly had been given information about a murder. We kept that very, very quiet, and that interview I think has just kind of disappeared. I don't even remember who it was we were interviewing at the time. It was years and years ago. But there is no statue of limitations on murder, and it was self-defense on his part, but nonetheless, you know, you're not supposed to turn in your interviewee. You will lose your credibility. You will ruin oral history

projects for almost everybody. Yes?

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: When the interviewee is not aware of that, for example...

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: The interviewee will not neccessarily be aware of it.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Would you instruct that person in telling that story to leave out the name of the ship, for example, or would you go that far?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I would, yes. I would simply, in his presence, explain it to him, and edit, as I did, edit the tape right there so that we went back and he told the story with continuity and he knew what had happened. I would never doctor a tape without that person knowing it. But, otherwise I would have to destroy the tape, I think. And it was a good, good interview.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: You could delete a portion of the tape with the person's...

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: ...knowledge and consent, right.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: You know, there are people who disagree.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I know that.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: ...how you deal with that.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I know there are. I'm just telling you what I did. I'm not going to send anybody to jail, because they told me something they shouldn't.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Well, you know, you have to think about people who interview for various reasons and I know that one of the things that we are concerned about now were trying to get a collection of papers that deal with the civil rights movement. And the person who wants to give us these papers wants us to say that we will not permit the papers to be subpoenaed. And you cannot put a state institution in that kind of situation so we had to tell her.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: You can't keep the court from...

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: She's raising more questions – she's raising questions that I don't think she should raise. Because nobody at this point is even concerned about it. She said, "Well they may become concerned," she says,"well, if we go thorough another McCarthy era, something like that."

I said, "But if you have them in you home or wherever, they can get them, if they're aware of them." So I just try not to raise those kinds of

questions.

The other thing is, well, I had some policemen in my class once, and we were talking about this. And he said, "Well, if you go too far, you can be in... what do they call it? You're accomplicing."

So you have to be careful how far you go on this because he said, "Well ,Dr. Harrison, if you know that person has that information and you tell them not to tell you, you are protecting that person. And the more you pursue that the more you can get into trouble by doing that."

So maybe the best thing to do is, to don't say anything if it's coming out. I don't know how you handle it. That's your own judgement when you get into that situation. But if you recognize – I mean if you do it out of total ignorance that's one thing, you know, but if you are aware...

VOICE IN AUDIENCE: It's no defense.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: It's no defense. But I'm saying the more you really deal with it the more you have a conscious situation that you are. I couldn't do it out of ignorance.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Well let me give you another perspective on it. When I first got involved with oral history, I attended a session at the oral history association one time

where a man was telling us that he had been invited to do a project on a. I think it was the Klu Klux Klan. And the person directing that particular session, I don't even remember who it was, said, "Don't." Or there was another one on the Mafia! It wasn't the labor unions. Oh, I mean there were connections with the labor unions but it was the Mafia. He had contacts and he thought he could do an oral history of it. They said, "Don't." Because, you know, while they might be happy to have your assistance, they might even cooperate with you. Once the project is finished, they don't need you, and they don't need you knowing that information. So it's not neccessarily a blessing. I had an opportunity to do the Klu Klux Klan at one time and I decided, "Well, we'll wait a few more years, until they're close to being dead, those particular people." And then there wouldn't be any repercussions, perhaps.

VOICE IN AUDIENCE: I've never taken a class, dealing with slander and libel. I'm interested in what issues come under slander. How do I as a listener listen for what?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Something that's said that would damage the reputation or the standing in the community of a living person.

VOICE IN AUDIENCE: What kind of interpretation of the person that was in the situation... They might be discussing how they're going to do something. It's a matter of interpretation, isn't it?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Yes. That's why a court case has to determine [and] juries determine whether or not something is actually slanderous given the law. You get one little tiny piece of law and you have to make that decision if you're on a jury. It's not easy. It is not easy. I've heard attorneys talk about it and they say they have difficulty interpreting.

VOICE IN AUDIENCE: At another university, the English project for the research paper is to do oral histories. And they did turn up another, just last year. And this was a freshman second semester project.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Oh dear.

VOICE IN AUDIENCE: And the teacher handled it very well and I believe the family that was holding all this underground all those years were relieved to get it out.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Well, now. If that happens, that's a different

matter. That's a different matter. There have been oral history projects that have been sued, or individual teachers who have been sued for sending kids out to interview families. If the family was poor particularly, they don't want that known, if they're doing better now. And they consider it an invasion of privacy and that's another issue, you know.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: How did the court case come out?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Oh, I don't know, I just read about the case.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I just wondered because I had heard that...

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I don't know.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Actually there have been few cases if any where oral historians, if any, had been taken to court and they won.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Well, probably, right.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: But there's a lot of time lost so you don't want to get in that.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Well, it can go all the way to the Supreme Court. This can take the rest of your life before the issue is resolved.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: You really don't want to get into that.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: But I think probably a private family can argue against this if it is a class assignment. Now if you just tell a kid to do an interview, find someone who doesn't mind being interviewed, that's different. Rather than saying, "Go. Interview your family." That's more specific. They can find somebody. They can rent a grandfather, or something, and the experience would be as good, but it is a legitimate [problem] and you have to respect the feelings of the interviewees.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: That's why I was saying the utmost concern should be the person being interviewed, to treat that person the way you would want to be treated.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Right. It's his memoirs.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: And not push.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: It belongs to him – or her. And it is his agreement to share it and then let other people into his life – is exactly what it is.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Let me just cover one other thing, and those are the sheets that are being passed around

Those are just examples. And also to put on your mind that you need to get a written consent of the person for the written interview. And there's a concern about when to get the written consent.

I have gotten them on the first interview. But I know Betty Mason at Columbia said that what she usually does, at the end of each interview, is to ask the interviewee if they mind this being used for scholarly purposes. I also inform the person when I'm setting up the interview why I am doing it and that I will want to use this for scholarly purposes so that they understand from the very beginning that I'm not just coming to talk to them to kill time. That I'm collecting this for a very important purpose so they always have in mind that what they're going to tell me is going to be used by scholars. I think that they need to know that from the beginning and all the way through the process.

But also once you get that consent, it's important to transcribe, take it back and then after they have carefully considered what they have, to get a written, legal, document, on their release of it, or their restrictions of portions of the interview. And I think that that serves as a protection. They've had all this time to think about it. They've had the opportunity to read it and so forth, that there should not be any legal problems there

because they've had time to share it with whomever they wanted to.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Another reason for getting the legal release form signed, and I have some sample form that I'll let you see this evening, they're out in the car in the rain, still. I learned this from a museum conservator, one time. He said that all of the sudden they were having problems with heirlooms that had been donated by a family member. Later an antique dealer would go by the museum and find really desirable pieces that would bring a high price and find out who the donor was and contact that donor or the grandchild of the donor, it might be, and offer them a reasonable price for it when they could make a lot more money for it. And the donors would request the items back. And if you have no legal form donating it to you, there's not a whole lot you can do.

And they warned us that – warned the session that the same thing could happen to the memoirs, the oral history memoirs, and that's absolutely true, it could. See, when we first started oral history, Dr. Crawford didn't tell you this. Oh, he said we learned by doing, as they learned, we didn't even know that it was absolutely essential, always, to have release forms, so we just kind of learned this because folklorists did

not ever get release forms. And we kind of learned from them and from anthropologists, but then eventually, we learned that it is essential and the law keeps changing, too.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I guess there are two other points here, that if you're with an organization, and that organization has legal counsel, it is well to let the legal counsel for the organization review this so that at least they are familiar with it if the question comes up. They would have had an opportunity to put whatever clauses they deem neccessary into the document. So those are actually just examples.

And I was told recently by an oral history project that the board of education for the Institution of Higher Learning in Mississippi would need to review my forms. We're not really doing a lot of oral histories now, but when we get started again that they would need to review the forms, because they are really the entity that would be sued, ultimately, in an instance like that. And it's really almost a formality, but it's protection that all parties involved should be aware of. Yes, and then you had a question?

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: First you explain that, give them a chance to

read it, and then if there are parts that they object to, you then ask them to reexplain and then what you do with the original?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: The original?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: The original tape.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: On the tape? Well, we close it. The tape is not available in that form. That's what I have done with the one instance that I had, where it closed. I took the tapes out, I took all references to it out, because this is what the lady wanted. Because we have enough lawsuits without me getting to be involved in one.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: I just want to know the steps, you know, because you want people to feel free and to keep talking.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Yes.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE And when you say to somebody, "Look, you read this and if you don't like it, you can fix it up, that's really a very free thing.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes, but we try to discourage it, though, you

see. And the way I try to discourage it is from the very beginning. Make sure that they understand that their are agencies investing their money in this process. They don't want to just be going through this just for exercise to have them use the time of day. So I've had very little of that. But if it were to occur, I would simply abide by that person's wishes. Because if that person, for whatever reason, wanted to go to court, that would take ultimately more time than my simply removing all references to it and putting it in a file which is not to be used.

VOICE IN AUDIENCE: Sign a consent form and?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: And see, in this instance, where I had stored this information, I said that a lawsuit could possibly be pending if any of this information were used. So that whoever uses it would – say something happens to me and I'm not there – somebody could use it. So I've marked it and I've done all that I think is necessary for me to do. She didn't ask me neccessarily to destroy it. She said, "Don't use it." And she didn't ever want to see it. You know, those kinds of things. I don't know what I would do if she said destroy. Because I don't think that a person's been given all those opportunities where they can dicatate to

you, "Destory."

You know, like if it's Federal money that you've spent, and a lot of time, and you've given them those opportunities and letters and everything, document that. See? So, and it's also on the tape at one point. I try to get enough proof. The other thing is that I try to make that person understand what it is we're doing. And that, to me, is the most important thing. They know from the very beginning we're not just talking here. You're creating a very important document. I cannot do it without you.

The other thing that I want to say is that increasingly the attitude has come back, you're co-creators. That the person being interviewed has as much right to that interview as you do. Once you enter this joint – it's like a joint venture that you're creating this document and you're both involved in it. So you have some rights to it because you've invested your time and agencies have invested their money into it. And once they enter into the agreement, you know, it's something a little bit binding by that.

So much so that in publication, I had an interview published by Southern Exposure. And they subsequently put it in a book. That interview credits the interviewee as much as it does me. In fact, the interviewee gets top billing on the interview. And that's the way they treated it and

she felt very good about it. You know, because it couldn't have been done without her. They were her words. So its that kind of thing and I think if you approach it that way, that we are co-creators of a historical document and they have as much invested in it as you do, that they will feel something binding by it. Unless sometimes little quirks do get into it to mess it up, but that's going to be very seldom, I think. And that also means that you have to really work with that person one on one. It's almost like babying them, in a sense but you can't do it without the person so you must be involved in the process. And it's also one of the reasons why I pulled back on a lot of just spot interviewing, assigning my classes to a lot of things that I did initially.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Yeah, me too. (Laughter)

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Because I realize how precious this document is that we're creating and that, maybe I've gone overboard in doing it. But I don't just ask students to go out and interview somebody.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I don't either.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Anymore.

VOICE IN AUDIENCE: After reviewing a transcript and somebody

sees, "Oh, my grammar was not right there," or, "It's not real clear," can you just make the changes on the written transcript. You don't have to go back and do something to the tape itself.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Right, yeah. If the interviewee is well enough educated to recognize this fact and says, "Oh, I sound like a blithering idiot there, can I please change this phrase," well, let them. And you know, if they write their memoir in the first place, you wouldn't have to go through the oral history process, so this may stimulate them to write something and proof it.

VOICE IN AUDIENCE: But you don't change...

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I'm afraid I do. I'm sorry.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: On some I do. I usually use one or two sentences to show the flavor but then I make it readable.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Because sometimes if people are in education and they see themselves in writing the way they talk.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Well, that's true. Right.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: You know, even I would be embarassed a lot

of times with things that I say. And sometimes they'll say, "Oh you just absolutely cannot use this," but you make it real nice and complimentary, but still what they said, but make it gramatically correct.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Subject-verb agreement, we're talking about mostly.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yeah, that kind of thing.

VOICE IN AUDIENCE: Do you tell them from the beginning that you're going to edit it in that type of way to make it gramatically correct? You said people with an education see. Are you talking about individuals themselves?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yeah, the person – if the person is an educator.

VOICE IN AUDIENCE: That you're interviewing?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes.

VOICE IN AUDIENCE: But if it is legit.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Well, the other thing, you have to consider the person who's going to use the interview. If, you know, the way I'm talking now. I'm starting sentences and stopping,

and so forth, and if I'm reading that it gets to be very difficult. I've used oral history transcriptions and they need to be readable. And unless you are a linguist, you are not necessarily into all of that. Or you are into psychology of how the person was reacting at a certain age, gerontology or something like that. You may be interested and that's why you keep the tape. But the average scholar is not going to be interested in a person's speech pattern and how they talked and so forth.

VOICE IN AUDIENCE: So the written document is just for readability? Any other uses for it would be for.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Now that's my opinion.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: There is a great deal of disagreement.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: That's right. But folklorists or other persons – You have to determine your purpose, your focus, what you're doing it for.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Edward Ives, who has a book that's on your list here, is a folklorist and anthropologist. And he says he never edits a word. He does it exactly verbatim. And it gives the flavor of the folks' speech. But he has a reason for doing that.

On the other hand, the project at Berkeley which Willa Baum, who wrote several of the manuals we use and Amelia Fry and other of the major oral historians in the country go to great extremes in editing. They clip everything that is on the same topic and rearrange the interviews so that all the – your mind skips and you pick up something you talked about thirty minutes ago and you come back to it. They cut all that and put it all together. So for the scholar using it it's much more readable. But you need to be aware of this process that you know that's what is done. And they bind it in a book and they give a copy to the person who was the interviewee and also to the funding agency which allowed them to do this. But they've always done it this way, that is their process. And it's a whole lot more work, I tell you, than either of the other ways.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: So once you decide on your project, you need to make all of these decisions.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Be consistent for the project, at any rate.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: If you are the user, you're going to take the information, you don't have to use all the information that is on the tape.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Oh no.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: That was on the tape. You can be selective.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Select what you need to use. She's had her hand in it for a long time.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: I have a couple of questions.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Okay.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: We keep rolling on, so some of these may go back. First of all, though, I'm not an oral historian. I'm becoming one for purposes of the dissertation. So the question may reflect that naiévite, but to me oral history is something different from, say, someone writing his memoirs. You said a minute ago, if they had written their memoirs, we wouldn't need oral history.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Well, okay.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: When we're dealing with history it seems to me oral history also sort of has a spontaneous quality because you're getting it from the person speaking at ten o'clock in the morning on November such-and-such, 1987. And I'm wondering, listening to you talk about giving the interviewee so many chances to correct, change, embelish, or make nicer what they said, does that not also sort of change the history that you're collecting? I'm not

sure that unless I heard you tell me that I had to do that that I would want to give someone that opportunity because I feel like something's lost. Just like I can write an English paper. The more you go over it the more refined it becomes, but that's not oral history.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: That's why what I do, if I'm – let's say this is the fifth interview. And I ask that person another question. I might say, "You told me that Mr. Black was a very mean man and on a given day he did thus-and-so. Why do you think he did that?" And they say, "Oh, did I say that? I didn't really mean to say that Mr. Black did that. I keep the first interview. I try not to let that person go back and change that first interview, but I do allow that person in this fifth interview to rethink that situation, if I think that that person really, if he was slanderous, for example, and he didn't really mean to be slanderous. If he tells me that a second time, you know, he meant to do that. And frequently, people do mean to say what they say. But if I feel something about it or I want clarification, I do give the person a chance. But I try to keep the whole sequence of the interviewee.

And in an index, you see what he said on a given day, you know you can see, let's say, all the references to Mr. Black was talking about Mr. White.

So all the references to Mr. White are in the index at one spot so you can see that. At several times this person talked about him. So if you are the scholar you would look at all of those references and you, if you were really doing research, you could see the dates on which he changed that. So you see that evolutionary process of a thought. And that's what I like to do.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: We had a major session on this at Jackson Hole, Wyoming, the year that Dr. Crawford was President of the Oral History Association. And one woman there had said the Berkeley Project had done seven hundred or eight hundred pages of interviews with her. She had been very important in the Democratic parties, a woman in politics. She was furious at somebody saying, never touch the tape. You don't let them alter a word. Make them stick with what they said – that's the journalist philosophy.

And she said, "I read my interview and I had given the wrong date for my mother's birthday." And she said, "I know the day my mother was born. I don't know why I did that, but I did, and it's false, and I want to correct the record." So, you know, when you're talking, sometimes your tongue does slip or your mind is racing on and you can't say it as fast. So you'll

have factual inaccuracies.

But, when I said it was a memoir, that is the way the court, the legal system defines a person's interview. It is that person's memoir and that's why that person has the right to edit, to change. Because it is his or her memoir, you see, and he is sharing that with the world. And that's why I said if they wrote it, we wouldn't, probably, need to go for that information. That doesn't mean that you couldn't go after they've written their memoir and say, "On page so-and-so, you say this. Would you tell me a little more about it." And you'd get the spontaneity. Certainly there would still be a room for oral history.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Well, not being sponsored by any group, as an individual working on a dissertation, I'm just thinking in horror of doing all of these interviews and then having to take the transcripts back and expect seventy-five and eighty-year-old people to then reread and give it back. My time limit at Memphis State would be up before I got all of those transcripts back.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Yeah. Let me comment on that a bit.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: That statement includes a great deal of ages. Seventy-five and eighty-year-old

people are not necessarily forgetful.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: There was a... it was a fifty-year-old man or forty-five.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Checking what that said. Not making changes. I mean even if no one changed a thing, I'm picturing returning fifty.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: When she finishes, I'll comment on that too.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I first became aware of this quite early in my oral history career. I was talking with a man who had been elected to Congress during the integration crisis in Little Rock, and he had gotten elected as a candidate against the integration. And he had been interviewed by the Eisenhower Library and Columbia University had sponsored the projects, so you know, this had real legitimacy as far as the project goes. They had sent him a copy of his transcript and asked him to review it and then to sign the release form and send it back, and this was four years after they had sent it to him. And he said, "I never have gotten around to reading that." He said, "I'd like you to look at it some time and tell me."

And I thought, "Oh my goodness, is this what's going to happen?"

So with my Vietnamese refugees were likely to be gone the next week when I went back to Fort Chaffee and the government protected their privacy so they would not let me know where they were going. The refugees did not know themselves, usually, when I was there. If they did know they would give me a forewarding address so I could send them a letter. But I could not make those promises to them. I had to get them to give me their consent.

We explained the project, "We're collecting this information which will be available to Vietnamese children who are going to grow up in this country and will not know what your experience was like on the eve of your immigration back in Vietnam. And so it's really for your descendants and we'll make them available to them," and so they wanted to cooperate, for that reason. But we couldn't promise them to give them a chance to – well they couldn't read the English translation, which was all we would have had time to transcribe immediately anyway. So there are different kinds of problems.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: That's why you have to decide what your purposes are and your organization's purpose. I want to comment on the fact that if you are a doctoral

dissertation student, if you are working with an established oral history project and they want to take your project on. They would be the ones who would be helping you to do this. You would be doing the interviews. If someone wanted to do that, and I would like to operate in a manner eventually so that we could offer that kind of service for somebody who was doing the research, because to me that scholar who's asking those questions, who's really into that question, is going to do infinitely better than my other graduate students who are just doing it for a class. And I think that your interviews would be so much more valuable.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Get them to sign the release form at the time, send them a copy at the time of the interview. Tell them that you will send them a copy of the typescript. Make sure it is a copy and not the only one you have. And that you need their response within a week and then call them on the telephone. I know Dr. Crawford always uses letters, but I get a lot more response from the telephone, because when you call somebody and say, "Have you had a chance to look at this yet? I really need to use it." And then if you know what part of it you're planning to use, tell them, "Look on page twenty-five, you know, that's the part I want to use. Is there anything inaccurate, anything

that you find a problem with.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: I'm thinking of sending a copy of the dissertation to everyone.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Uh, do not do that. Do not promise them that. You can put one in their library or church or something.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: If you have a legal consent form similar to the ones that you've shown us, and it is signed the time of the interview, does the next step of having them look over the transcript, can it be treated as a courtesy rather than a legally binding responsibility? So that if someone just says they didn't have time to do it, that wouldn't hold up, for instance, the dissertation.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Well, right. Say, "If you have any objections, please let me know by X date." Put that in writing, "And if you do not get anything otherwise, I will assume you consent."

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: We also sent certified letters when we were nearing the end of the project. On the letter we stated the number of times we had contacted them and if we haven't

heard from you by a certain date.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: That's a dollar and a quarter a letter, or something.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I know, but if see, she's working with the office they, you know, if you've given them a reasonable period of time, at least that shows your effort in getting their consent. That's really all you're doing.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: That's true.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Are there other questions? Now there are several other things here. Tape, records, microphones, how to use properly and considerately, follow-up with the interviews. I think we've almost covered all of those things. Another concern is that if you're interviewing older persons and you are doing a life history on them, let's say you've had a series of six, maybe some people even ten interviews with the individual so that you're become a living part of their life, maybe over a year or six months, whatever. And you've finally finished, they have edited all the tapes, they have edited all of the tapes, they've been very courteous to you, and then they don't hear from you for a very very long time, or you never have any contact with

them. I think that's unkind.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: It is.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: You've invaded their life, they've shared it all with you, and then you just drop them. You know, you've got to have some sort of follow-through. One of the things that we did, we don't do it now and it's terrible, but we do have them on our mailing list and they receive invitations to our programs and things like that. They just become a part of any program we do through the Institute at Jackson State. We inform them. But it's good to try to have some lasting relationship with them, particularly senior citizens. Because I've heard oral historians talk about, well when we were finished and finally over, the person died within two or three weeks because there was nothing. They felt like their life was fininshed. And you have to be aware of that kind of thing.

I don't know what other kinds of things you can do, unless you plan to use the interviews, like the Ferris Street Historic District, like I shared with you earlier. We did the brochures, we followed up with this book the scholars did. So we share all of this with the persons who were interviewed and sometimes they call up and say, "Oh, that's really nice.

I'm glad to see that you used that and we appreciate it so very much." So anything that comes back as a result of the project, I would share that with them.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: If you know you're going to give a talk using references to the interviews or the project, invite them to come, if it's possible. The county historical society, for example, and they may very well show up if they know that that's going to be. Or if you do a tape-slide show or something, invite them. And they have a great interest in it. It gives them a sense of pride in having made a contribution.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Do you take picture of your subjects?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I do not personally. I wish that I could.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I do but it really does interfere. I have even had training as a professional photojournalist, now so I know how to make a decent photograph. But I cannot do it at the same time I do the interview. And when you do it right afterward, all you get is somebody sitting there with their arms crossed. You get nothing but a dull head. What you really need to do if you want to have a photographic record – it's nice to have a little snapshot, anyway, so

people can have some sense of what they look like – but if you want do the real photograph like the Radcliffe thing, you need to go back at a later time. Once you know the person and have the rapport and everything, go back and have hours to spend and you take several rolls of film and get them working in the kitchen or sewing or doing craft work, whatever it is that person does, out sawing with a cross-cut saw or something. And then, you know, you will have those that can be used. And they're wonderful.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I understand that's what Judith Sedwick did?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Well, she's a professional photographer, apparently.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yeah, she worked with Margaret Walker Alexander.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Look at Jack Hurley's work. Jack Hurley is a professional photographer. He's the first one that I met and he's the one who first taught me how to look through a camera and made me realize that I too can learn that. Well, Lynwood Montell who is a folklorist taught me what to do when they start to read a

document to you. You need to get it. If you're way out in the boonies, you can't borrow the family Bible or the will or something. So you can get a decent 35mm camera that will allow you to screw something on the lens and you can get a little thing for $20 that will enlarge what you're doing. And have somebody hold just a lamp down to give you extra light so there won't be any shadows and you can take and you can get two or three of those and you can make it really large. You can photograph a document and have it right there, so you've got that legal thing, right then and there. Do as I say, not as I do. I leave my camera in the car quite often. (Laughter)

I want to say one thing about responsibility. We've been talking about your having talked with someone. Quite often, when a person starts talking to you about his memories or her memories, something sad may come up. You may even see tears. You have to be the judge of whether or not to go on. If it's very important, you let them go on. If not, you may want to say, "Well, why don't we take a break and have a cup of coffee. And then come back," and they get over the emotionalism and they might be able to handle it again.

But if you get somebody to that heightened state, if they've just told you about the death of their mother or their child or something and they're

kind of shaky, you don't just pack up your tape recorder and run for the car. Even if you have to call the babysitter and say, "I'm sorry, I'm going to be a few minutes late." You stay there, and you get that person to change the topic and you talk about the weather or about next week or something to keep that person from going through the trauma alone. Because if you don't, you could be responsible for the death of that person. Or for a serious illness. And I speak with great authority. I could tell you where I learned this. The Menninger Clinic people told me this.

I was jokingly telling them about one of my interviews. I had been to Army War College as a VIP guest and all the guys were entertaining me. There were two hundred guests there and only about fourteen women. So they got interested in my interest in history and they knew I taught literature so they found the brother of one of the thirty men in my particular discussion group was a novelist. And they decided it would be great if I interviewed him. So they set it up and then the week went by and the interview finally took place the last night I was going to be there after dinner, like at eleven o'clock at night.

He would not go into the den alone and let the other people sit in the living room chatting, you know. He insisted that we have a group thing, a

happening, and he would not talk to me. He respected me, you know, as a professional, but he would joke and make some, you know, smart-aleck remark every time I asked a question. So finally the other people knew him and they perceived my problem.

And one woman just said, "Well what do you write about when you write your novels." And he gave her a beautiful, structured answer, you know, so they caught on immediately. So each one of them asked a question. So we just passed the microphone around the room and let them ask and I finally decided, well, I am the least important person here. I will just excuse myself and go to the ladies room. And while I was gone I heard this cry. He said, "Where has she gone? She's not there! She's left me here on the couch alone! and abandoned me!" So I realized that my presence was important. Even though he was cutting up with me there, I was getting the information. It's a wonderful interview. I will have to cut that one like the Berkeley people do because the nonsense portions are just demeaning, but the rest of it is cogent. But my presence was still essential. He wasn't talking to them. He was talking, indirectly, to me.

But, I was telling this to a couple of people at one of our meetings in San Diego and the guy from the Menninger Clinic was there and he said,

"That's right. You are the therapist, and you have the responsibility to stay there until this person is back to a normal keel because they can literally go into shock. They might even have a heart attack or something.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I want to share something on that, too.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Okay.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Shirly Tanzer out in Washington interviewed a lot of Jewish people about their experiences in the Holocaust. And so she was one of my consultants at Jackson State and that was her whole thing, how to interview people who've had very traumatic experiences. And she also said that frequently if you're not interviewing people who've had traumatic experiences, most people have had them. And if you're interviewing them over a period of time and you've established a very good rapport, they will just let their minds run so that they get into these kinds of situations.

So what she demonstrated – and this was her intent, in her interviewing – to take people back to those very unpleasant experiences that they had not talked about and she demonstrated how you gradually lead them there. That's where your research comes in. You have to know where that person was and what probably happened, so that they talked

about those experiences. And then she said, you gradually, intentionally, lead them back to the present.

So I had a chance to do that once with a Vietnam veteran and he had had a very traumatic experience in Vietnam, the shock of going over there and soforth. So in structuring the interview, I actually structured it, you know, with him joining the army, going through camp, getting there, going over there, how he went, what happened when he got there, the whole bit, and how many days before he had this experience and then he got into being in the rice paddy and the things that he saw and he really talked about it. I was surprised at how excited he got, as if he were even there. And he talked for about thirty minutes without anybody interrupting him. And I realized that he needed to talk through this.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: For therapy.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I was glad she had told me that because he really – he just almost – it was like he went off and he just talked and then all of a sudden he really had eye contact with me again. And so then I began to ask him, "Well, what what were your reactions after this. What did you think about after this." And then days after that, it was just one event to one event and finally I said,

"So what did you think about all of this when it was time for you to leave." And, you know, he told me how he reacted to it when he was on the plane, how he constantly had these flashbacks to that. And we gradually walked him back to his job where he was. But that took about three hours. But he was that much into it. So, you know [that] interviewing can be very rewarding, but you have to remember you have responsibilities.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: It can be very draining on the interviewer, too.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Oh yes.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: We had a similar thing with this Vietnamese refugee project. I told you about calling around and getting scholars to say, well, call somebody else and one of the things we did was call all of the scholars that we knew how to get quickly and say, "We're going to do this project. What questions would you like us to use that you might, someday, want to use?"

And one of the men that I called had written a couple of books, and he said, "I would like to know how they got out," so we just put that in our list of questions. On the other hand, we had talked with Bill Moss who had worked with Asians, and he said you never ask a direct question because

it's an affront. So you go all the way around Robin's barn. You say, "Where were you born?" We weren't interested in where they were born and we couldn't spell the Vietnamese names. That was a mistake. We should have said, "What do you think about the weather today." But anyway, we finally would get around. We were going to ask them, "What is life like in Fort Chaffee and what do you expect life to be like for you in America and what hopes do you have for education and the future for yourself or something. And that's where we were headed. But in the meantime, having cranked in this question, "How did you get out," we have tape after tape where we sat for twenty or thirty minutes and listened to them. These are tear-jerking stories, you know, and they were very draining on us because we had to sit through them all. But it was therapy for them. And it was good and I'm glad we did it for them – I mean with them. And then we did come back to the part – we did it by accident. You see, I get the same place she does. (Laughter)

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yeah, well I learned too, when I first started doing my interviews I was working on Uttica Institute and Piney Woods and I would go out with two students and we would intend to spend the whole day. One day we did three interviews. I

said, "I think we should do four tomorrow." And we would do four and then we would try to crank in a few more. But then as we began to do the interviews, I was so tired when I got home that I just simply could not go the next day. And finally we got so that we would try to do two per day. And even that was really too taxing, if you actually get into the interview and spend that quality time with that person that you need to. You are drained afterwards. Now when I really have a project, I try to schedule to do no more than two in a week.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Right.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Because you have to get into the person that you are going to interview before you go there so that you're really prepared. I don't, although I, as she does, sometimes prepare questions. I don't go there with my questionaire and sit and go down my questions. They're in my head.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Let me tell you why I did, with that Vietnamese project. We had a committee and we asked everybody from as many different disciplines as we could what you would like to know so that you might someday use this. We had somebody from education, somebody from economics, you know. So we had

all of these questions and they're very good lifestyle questions. And eventually, when you're sitting there looking at somebody eye-to-eye and you don't even understand the language they're saying, you have to keep your finger down here so you can remember what you've asked, especially if you're doing two or three a day. I actually did nine, two days. Nine on Saturday and nine again on Sunday and I will never ever ever do that again in my life.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: How distracting is it when the tape runs out and you have to put it back in. Let's say you were in the middle of that story.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Just try to do it very quickly and keep eye contact.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: They keep talking. You can hardly stop them from talking.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: You just do it very quickly. It's just one of those unfortunate things that you have.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: To see if there's a better way. Do you check after you start it to see if it's working?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I don't any more. I did that the first

interview that I did and I forgot to turn the tape recorder back on.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: You get so that...

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: So I had to do it again two years later.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: You practice doing this so that when you go there you pretty much do it automatically, because you've got to be thinking about that person's comfort and ease and not really distracting them. You don't want them focusing on this tape recorder.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I do that in the car before I go in the house, or at home. I put the tape in, I introduce the project and myself and then I listen to it to make sure the tape recorder is working. And then I go and we just begin.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: You get so you just know your tape recorder. See, mine has two buttons and I just automatically do that, you know.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: You do look to see that the wheels are turning.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: You make sure that it's on. The other thing

that I had on the sheet is you make sure. You try to use the current rather than the battery.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Absolutely.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Because sometimes the battery can – you know, it could be a bad battery although you just put it in. So, but one thing, you just have to know your tape recorder. The worst thing to happen is with a very busy person, as I was interviewing a representative once, and for some reason we spent thirty minutes trying to get the tape recorder going. He wanted to hear – Otherwise I wouldn't have known that I wasn't recording. He wanted to hear it. And it was lucky for me because the tape recorder was absolutely not working. The only thing that was wrong, the pause was down. And I felt so stupid when I finally got it going. But I can't emphasize enough the importance of really knowing your tape recorder so that you can just almost do it automatically without thinking about it.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Do you have a good exit line? I mean if you're interviewing someone who's willing to give you all day, but you only have an hour and a half, is there a way to cut it short without destroying the rapport that you have created between

yourself and the person you're interviewing?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: What I did with this legislator, we had to do it in his office, I had a short time and generally he did. I would say to him what my constraints were, and I had his life sort of outlined. The first interview I let him talk incessantly. After that I told him which periods I was going to deal with. And I would say, "Now today, because of the time constraints, I'm going to have to go, can we just restrict ourselves to this phase of your life? And when you have to go and I have to go, we'll just have to stop and we'll come back." He adjusted to that. And I think it's a matter of explaining yourself and let the person know you have constraints as well as they do. And have them understand that at the very beginning, and say, "If I have to stop, please don't be insulted. You know, it's just one of those things, today, and we'll do this another time." That's the way I handle it. And usually they're very understanding, you know.

We're getting a cue that it's time to go.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Do you ever interview more than one at a time? Have two or three people?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I don't like to do that. But I have done it.

And the reason I don't like to do it is that being an oral historian and a historian, I want to get that person's perspective. And sometimes with husband and wife, the husband will say, "Dear, it didn't happen this way."

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Husbands and wives are not good ones to do that way.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: You know, but people from different perspective disagree. I know somebody was asking about John Langston Boston this morning, and we had him there, and he's an anthropologist, and he does it entirely different. He believes in group interviews. And as a historian, I rarely do want to have the group interaction. So it depends upon the discipline. That's why I said at the beginning you have to decide what your focus is, what you're trying to do and work from that point on.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I have done it both ways. It's better to do it individually. But sometimes, if the people are absolutely insistent it's better to go with a group than not get your interview and they can stimulate one another's memories. I did a whole oral history project, in fact I taught a class in oral history at a nursing

home one time. There was a project director there who was supposed to keep them active and interested in things, and she solicited students, and the State of Arkansas had just passed a law saying that they could go free of charge if they were over sixty. So we signed them up to audit and had one graduate student who was taking the course for credit, so she did the interviews and the transcripts. That was her job. The people we would interview, one person each time, but everybody else would listen. Then after we had finished that interview we would go around the room and we would take one topic each day. They would suggest the topics often, and everybody would give his or her opinion or knowledge about this topic. It could be anything from the way your mother cooked turnip greens to one woman who was an attorney wanted to talk about the Patty Hearst case, which was right then current. So we went around the room and everybody told us what he or she thought about the Patty Hearst case. And it really was revealing of how attitudes change dramatically, and they enjoyed it. And they came looking eagerly for it every week.

Then we had all the way to the predjudice of a woman who was almost a hundred who still thought that the Civil War was a mistake, that that was a wonderful way of life, people just didn't understand that. And I

couldn't help thinking, of course, you were the part that enjoyed it. You were not of the group that found the difficulties. And it never occured to her that they just said, well, she's so old. All the others, in their eighties, said, "Well, she's just so old you can't really depend on her attitude being that up-to-date anymore." She had a boyfriend. She found the oldest man there and he escorted her to dinner each evening and her sister-in-law, who was about eighty-five was there, and she said, "Isn't that ridiculous!" and I thought, "Well, gee. I hope when I'm a hundred I would care whether somebody escorts me to dinner or not."

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Well, are there other questions? You want to make an announcement? The one thing I wanted to say, we've said all of these do's and don'ts, but if you have not done an interview, the best thing is to go and do an interview. And the other thing is that if you have a project, decide what your project is going to be and what is going to work for your project. Because not all of these rules apply to every situation.

DR. JOHNNYE STRICKLAND: That's true.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: You just have to get out there and do it. We're finished.

WOMEN OF COURAGE ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE, NOVEMBER 15-17, 1987
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

NOVEMBER 17, 1987: 9:45 A.M. "TOOLS OF THE TRADE: USE OF ORAL HISTORY MATERIAL." PANEL MEMBERS DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND, UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK; DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON, JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY. TRANSCRIPTION BY J. DOUGLAS SIMS

DR JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Lay people get the impression that you're going to interview everyone. They were making plans for what we could do to celebrate something. Eventually you need to say we will select a representative from each area of the state and, the more people we had to select from, the more typical were our responses can be, or something like that. People can get angry if you didn't interview them, if they felt everybody who got the letter might be, so you have to be very careful not to give the wrong impression.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: We're supposed to talk about tools of the trade, use of oral history materials. So we'll just start with questions as they are listed here so that we can cover everything everbody is interested in, or at least what they have on here and then we can go from there. I guess I can start out with what use can be made of oral history interviews. The way I have used it primarily is to document institutions, community history, and for my own individual

research projects. Well, the first thing, we used it for actually, my use of it was when I was at the University of Kansas, to have students in the Black Studies class to fill in the gaps, like experience that was really not available in books. And so they have taken that kind of idea at the University of Kansas now to the extent that they are building one of the major collections of Black state history in Kansas. They have been funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Archives to collect the history of Blacks in Kansas. And that's going to be a part of the Kansas Collection, interviewing and they're collecting records as well. But we initially used it because the information about Blacks in Kansas was not available and so we had the students to do two interviews that supplemented their classwork.

But then, when I came to Mississippi – I said this to some of you yesterday but a lot of you are different today – I started with the research on Piney Woods, and I actually set out to interview people, which I've learned later is the wrong thing to do.

People at Duke University – and there I received some oral history training – believe that you start with a research project and that your oral history is just a supplement to the traditional research. That if you start in that manner you're not liable to duplicate, and you're going to ask the

questions that really needed to be asked in order to fill in the gaps of your research. So that way oral history is used as a supplement to traditional research, and I really think that that is very legitimate. You might think that you don't need to treat it in that manner. I feel that almost anything you do in terms of interviewing people you need to do some work on. And I was listening to an interview on the "Today Show," and I know that for almost all of their interviews, they spend lots and lots of hours preparing for those interviews so that they won't ask stupid questions or they can ask something that's really going to give additional information. Although that's the journalistic approach, I think for the historian it's just as important, or any oral historian. You have to know that you're asking significant questions because it's so expensive to transcribe, and then we're going to get into transcribing and to preserve these records.

So why preserve what Dr. Larry Gitman used to call a lot of garbage. You know, you don't need that. So the person needs to be very responsible in preparing. So I've used it here to document Piney Woods School, sort of bring it up to date. I also used it with the Ferris Street Historic District. With the Piney Woods I have some listings of those interviews and any time I have these listings, let me provide sort of an introduction to what the school is all about and an overview. You're free to take the ones that I

have so I don't have to take them back home. This is a compilation of community lectures. This was a Mississippi Committee for the Humanities project. You have the Tennessee Committee, we have the Mississippi Committee. They funded the lectures, and in these lectures some of the people came to us for information and we would give them particular interviews and some of the other people would interview persons themselves who knew about the community. So that their talks are based primarily on interviews and that's what this represents.

Because for the Ferris Street Historic District in Jackson, you go to the library. There was no information initially, because frequently, for some reason if they had some information it was probably about crimes, and whatever, so that the clipping files a lot of times did not reflect things that occured in the Black community. You have to go to the folk if you're going to get the information. And for those of you Memphians, is that right, Ferris Street is comparable for Jackson to Beale Street here in Memphis. A very significant neigborhood where Blacks lived first in the city, in the first part of the city of Jackson. And it has declined because of – we hate to say it – but it's been because of integration. And Blacks could go other places so they stopped going to Ferris Street and it declined and now they're trying to rebuy the area. But anyway, that's what this

work has been. The other thing, quickly here, is that in order to interpret the neighborhood, we took that same information that was given to us about buildings and about the neighborhood to come up with this brochure Since it was a community project rather than to produce a scholarly book we thought to use persons to give something back to the community that they could look at immediately.

So we developed this walking tour brochure and then I had another one that was dealing primarily with architecture that I passed out yesterday so I don't have any more of those. But this provided the people with that information, a capsule kind of information. A lot of brochures that we looked at initially would have a whole page of writing about the building and then a picture over here. And we thought, well people are not going to read that much information. So we just did it. This is the reason we did it this way. And we hired a photographer to take what we thought were pretty good photographs in doing that.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: [Inaudible].

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: William Friedman? Yes. He's one of the best, we think. Of course, there's Jones. We're glad you like him, but you have Jones here in Memphis.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: [Inaudible].

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes. Because he comes to Jackson and does the photography of events down there for us But anyway, the people in the community were very appreciative of this But this is taking the oral history and using it. The other use, I don't have an example of that, but when we did this project, we had four things built in to it. We started with oral history. We got the information with oral history. Then we did architectural – we looked at the community through the architecture that was there. We had Richard Dozier to do that and then we had the Photography Workshop He's with the Tuskeegee Institue, an architect there. We had the Photography Workshop. Roland Friedman was the lead photographer on that, but we had people from the Museum of Art to come in to help us collect old photographs. But here again, sometimes when we were collecting the photographs we would get interviews or during the interview process we would ask people for the old photographs in addition to asking them about the houses. And this culminated in an exhibits workshop. What we had there was people from the Historical Museum came in and taught the people in the neighborhood how to do exhibits using the oral history, the photographs, and the artifacts.

So we put together an exhibit of the neighborhood And when the exhibit opened, we used the words from some of the oral histories that we

had in the interview so that individuals from the community could come in and say, "Well, I told you that." Sometimes it would be that several people had given us the information, but sometimes we would choose to quote the person who said the most pithy kind of things. So they felt real ownership in terms of doing that and that exhibit is still available in the Smith-Robertson Museum. See, everybody feels like ownership, because they gave us the initial information which encouraged the city to do something about the museum. It's still a very viable project and the interviews are available at the Mississippi Museum, the Historical Museum, the Smith-Robertson Museum, and we have them available at Jackson State. So that's one use of the oral histories that the community sees as a result of having done that. I've not interviewed the political figures like she has done, so we make a good team in that kind of sense because I have been working more with the people in my neighborhood and projects that I really care about in that sense. So, what do you use it for?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Do I have show and tell here? I have some questionaires. I knew you would want to know about them, so I didn't prepare new ones. These are the historic forms that were used in whatever project there was. There are a couple here from the Vietnamese Refugee Project. The first one is all white. We

just kept xeroxing them and we had eight interviewers, all Ph.D.'s and all trained in interviewing.

The yellow one is the one that I finally made for myself. It has dark black copy and I found I could see it, late at night or in dim light, and you'll see little pencil marks there and right at the edge. The pencil marks show the questions we had found not to be terribly productive. We had originally thought they might be very good. We were trying to prepare that project for as many different disciplines of scholars who might some day want to use our collection and it's still available for those purposes. One of them was psychology and another was education. Between our committee members or among our committee members we had doctorates in all these disciplines there, telling us what kinds of questions to ask. Sociologists, economists, etc. And so they told us to ask about the traumatic experiecnces of the children in getting out of Vietnam so we kept asking these questions and the people would look at us with this. "What [kind of] a dumb question is that?"

The kids – it didn't bother them. They're too little to care. And one of the things that I just realized today in looking back over this questionnaire is that that is a vital piece of information. We've been taught, in our culture, that traumatic experiences in the first eighteen

months of life determine whether a child is a good person or a bad person or all these things. That's not what other cultures neccessarily believe or teach children. And the Vietnamese, in particular, assume that the child, until sometimes a very old age if they had stayed in Vietnam, will obey the parents. We saw little children, six to seven or eight years old, sitting on the steps of an army barracks in Fort Chaffee for one hour sometimes in sun. I mean they were in the shade but we were standing right at the edge of the sun. A hundred and ten degrees, it would be. While we were talking with their parents, they would sit there. They did not get up, they did not fidget, they didn't do anything to distract. And you know, there's no American kid three or less or even older that would have done that. They would have made mother or daddy look at them and quit paying attention to this adult. So one of the things we got here is something about the way they treat their children altogether. So I'm going to go back and do my psychological study, now that I realize what I have.

The Vietnamese children act like American children nowadays, by the way, those who have been to America. They are like their peers. And the parents – this is causing a conflict with the parents who expect them to behave like Vietnamese children are supposed to. I'm passing these around. There's another one on Vietnam veterans. I would change it slightly. I did

this for the group of veterans on our campus. They wanted to do something of themselves. So I made a quick questionnaire so they could use it as a guide.

There's another one on family history. I had a freshman composition class who were going to read John Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath and find somebody from the 1930's that could remember living during the depression. We read a chapter at a time. We talked about his style and the subject matter and they had to interview this person, transcribe the interview, and then we shared our insights from the interviews. So that was for a biographical interview and it has the depression in the background. Because it was that particular decade we were looking for. I am not a historian. We were not doing this for historical purposes. We were doing this so that my students would have something that would generate an interest in the realization that real life has something to do with how you write and how you read. And so English teachers do things differently.

Let me pass out a couple of other things. These are Arkansas-related. I taught this woman how to do oral history. She herself was a photographer. So she did the interviews. She got someone else to do the writing because she was not a writer. But her photography is of aging

people who are craftspersons. And she actually found some people who are the last persons in the State of Arkansas and maybe the last in the country who know how to braid. Do you know how to braid with twelve to fifteen or twenty braids? A row – well there is such a woman, still there. Another Arkansas-related. We have books, you know. This is Mississippi writers. Let me just pass this around. Interviews with writers. Someone has interviewed writers. There's another Arkansas stack – a whole stack. This one is on folklore. I may have mentioned to some of you a woman walked into my office and wanted a job as a teacher. This is a national publisher, a New York publisher who published what she had already collected. She had three file cabinets full of interviews and photographs. So this is a book on a woman who had been involved for fifty years in education. She was on national commissions, I think, for libraries. Five different presidents made her members of commissions. So a committee decided she would be a good sesquicentennial for the state subject and I was commissioned to do the oral history interviews from which someone else would write her biography. So that's just what came out.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: So in this case you're using oral history to support a biography?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Right.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Is this person living?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: She is living

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: How interesting.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Right. This is one which came about – the Crisis at Central High. You probably saw the movie or were aware of the movie. The woman was a white high school teacher. She was interviewed in the Eisenhower Project on the Crisis at Central High, the integration crisis. The interviews are at Columbia University and at the Eisenhower Library. She subsequently wrote a book. She had kept a diary. She didn't tell the interviewer she kept a diary. And then eventually she sent the script to Joanne Woodward and Joanne Woodward was looking for good parts for women actors and she herself produced it and acted in the work. Okay, those are the main things. This is family folklore. If you're interested in families, this woman has a Ph.D. in family folklore. She is now getting grants. She was on our staff for about six years and she taught for maybe three semester because she kept getting grants to go to Africa. She also did African-American studies and folklore. So hers is oriented towards family traditions. And you might want to look at that.

You can do media projects, of course. I was going to bring a media

project that I did. I did the interviews for it with people who had stayed in Arkansas after the internment – the Japanese internment during World War II. The project was organized as a media project. A photojournalist knew about the FSA (Farm Security Administration) photographs from the 1940's in the National Archives or the Library of Congress. He wanted to take that selection. There's something like a hundred and fifty that dealt with the internment centers in Arkansas. He wanted to use those and have information from people whose memories we had on oral history to comment on those photographs of camp life. And then he was going back to the camp and make photographs of what was there. Well we planned all of this elaborately, got our grant and then we went to the camp. There's a smokestack there. And when I first moved to Little Rock, in the late fifties, there were about twenty Japanese families in Little Rock, so I knew that they all knew one another and I knew I could find them if they were in Arkansas. Well, I found them but there was only one who had remained. There were about twenty, as late as the late fifties. Subsequently, as they've grown older, they've gone back to California where they originated.

And we lucked out in one internationally famous artist who happened to fly into town right after we had announced our project in the

newspaper. A woman called me and said, "You will want to meet him at the airport." And I did and interviewed him. He had stayed at the camp the entire time it was open. Most people got out and got jobs. The men did. The women stayed there and the children. But he stayed there because a professor of English who was a photographer himself went down from Conway. He went down to the camp to take photographs of it and he met this artist and he told him, "You must document this. You must use your skills, your talents to document your people's experience. This is a historic event. So this artist stayed there. He still has them in his possession. He has never given them to anybody. He has never had an exhibit of them and he has never sold one. He has fifty paintings that he made on canvas that the Federal Government provided for school children. He taught art in the schools and they provided, that kind of crummy stuff they're going to provide for schools, but at any rate he had paints and did this. We would never have even known those existed if our project hadn't come along at the same time.

Well, since Jay Friedlander is a photographer, he also had media contacts and he planned from the beginning to make a media project that would be shown on educational television. So he hired professional photographers. He is a professional photographer. He made the still shots

But then he hired a professional movie outfit to come and they spend half a day in the broiling sun. My job was to come and entertain the two interviewees, a white man who had been one of the directors of the camp who was ninety-three at the time. He spoke Japanese fluently. And the other one was a Japanese man, the one who had remained in the state. So I had to entertain the other one while one of them was being interviewed on camera. We had this professionally made movie and a videotape, also. It was on videotape. They did a beautiful job. And it didn't cost a lot of money because Jay knew how much it would cost. The original grant was about five thousand dollars, I think. Eventually they got another four or five thousand and put it on film. And that cost a whole lot more. But that included the fifteen dollars per photograph from the National Library of Congress you had to pay to get them to make the photograph that you can use. And my pay, I was paid a regular fee for an interviewer. And we had twelve hours of interviews. We paid to have them transcribed at a regular rate.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: What happened to the artists' work who had remained there. Has he shown it to anyone?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Okay. No, he has not. He brought some slides of it and showed me and Jay and I

have talked about my going up and doing a follow-up project with him before he dies. Which we should do quickly, because years are getting on. The white man died last week, by the way. He was a hundred and one. Incidentally, I showed this videotape last year. A Japanese woman writer of children's books came to Little Rock and gave a talk. We have a symposium of children's writers every year. And a teacher read that woman's book about a girl living in one of the internment camps to her sixth-grade class. I went over, after they had already read the book, and talked about that. I took this videotape over. We had two sixth grades together, twelve-year olds. Out of the two grades, about fifty kids, there were two that were non-Black. One of them was Mexican, I think. But they were fascinated by the story and some of their comments were, "Well, I never knew that there was discrimination against anybody who wasn't Black." So, you know, it was very revealing to them and to us.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Okay. I guess we need to move on unless you have some questions about uses of oral history. There are probably some that we haven't even thought about that you may be familiar with. But there are almost unlimitless uses to which you can put oral history. Records and identifications of interview materials. I don't know where to start on that, but one of the first things

that we do in terms of records is the labeling of the tape. I thought you might have some tapes. Do you want to show those?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Uh, well, no. I have a blank tape here

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Okay, well I'll just tell you what's very, very important that you do and you have to be very methodical about the labeling. The name of the person is first of all on the tape. Yes. And if you're with a program other than yourself, it's important to see who did the interview. The interviewer. The date, and the place where the interview has occurred. This is often on the tape, the audible part. But it needs to be on the tape and the case as well. Now the first thing that we do with the tape is bring it back to the office and we have a register that we list ours in.

We assign an accession number to it. There are many complicated systems, but what I have begun to do is do January 1, I start zero. I mean zero point eighty-eight. Or eighty-seven. Whatever the year is. And the first tape is one, the next tape is two, and so forth. So I can keep up with the number of tapes produced in a year. The first time we started, we had some complicated system that the library gave us and everybody always got confused. This way if it's the tenth tape, the next student who comes doesn't have to worry about the subject. We don't have a huge project, you

know. Last year we did, I think, six interviews all together. So why have that big complicated system? So next year, tape number one is going to be zero one point eighty-eight. Okay? The second tape, if it's produced in May, is zero two point eighty-eight. So if we get fifteen by December, that's going to be fifteen point eighty-eight. And the next year I start all over again.

That's one way to do it. It's simple to me. To keep up with. But you need a system. And this is important in many many ways as your tape collection grows. And even if you were doing it on an individual basis for your research, I think it's important to put a number to it. It helps you to keep up with things. That number follows that tape wherever it is. When we are organizing – let's say one of the things that I would do with a class that we're now going to transcribe, maybe. That's not my objective – to have them organize a tape collection. And I'll just pass out this sheet. Everybody may keep these. I think we have enough for everybody. And there we have the general topic, the date, the place, and some personal data about the narrator, address, relatives, friends, and this can be used for several things. You can use it to prepare for the interview or you can use it to document what has occurred. Because it has the relationship of the narrator to the person who's doing the interview, the birthplace, the

date, the occupation, the length of acquaintance, and so forth. And then the interview data. You'll get those, she's passing them out. Side one or side two, the estimated time, and the subjects covered.

This is a simple thing that I have used in my classes and it helps us to keep up with what's going on and each person knows. Because one of the things that I do in research class is to have those students use each other's interviews for doing a research project and this helps everybody to keep up with it but you can also use it in you office and with your project to keep up with the tapes. But if you have already an office system set up, you don't have to use this. Like in my office, we use the tape register. And it has everything in it. But the most important thing is to have that accession name, number, the name of the subject, if you have several subjects, as we do. Like our register reflects Piney Woods Project, we did something on the good old days and have a series on that, and we have the thing on Ferris Street Historic District and then I have a miscellaneous category. And in the miscellaneous we have Civil Rights, we have Social Change, and several things like that, topics that I've used for various classes in the process of doing that. And, okay, the next thing that we do with the tape after listing it in the register is put the same number on the tape, I said that earlier, but then I had the students make a subject file

card and an author card. Some projects don't do this, you know. It depends upon what your objective is.

Then when we start the transcription project. I'll just go ahead and go through this and then when Dr. Strickland starts talking, she can do that as well. The processing and the time sheet here, I'll just share this with you. There are three of these, and when you put these together you can see the kind of flow that we use in our total process in oral history transcription. We'll go ahead and start that and then we'll start this other sheet after that. There are three separate sheets here. There are approximately twenty-five steps in that whole process. But this gives them everything that I was just about to say there. Enter it into the book, and the accession number and all of those kinds of things and putting in a folder, keeping the same number, then when people are transcribing they have the same kinds of numbers. This is not any system that's original with me. I've had lots and lots of consultants. Among them Anne Shakley from Fisk University, Louis Starr from Columbia University, and Willa Baum. Who else came down?

So you know a lot of people have added to this system and then I've used several books to sort of implement it. So it's not one person's system, it's a lot of adaptations. And I think that as time goes on we may

add a few or delete a few. In terms of this kind of record-keeping, the whole thing is retrieval. I think that's the key. You want to organize your process so that you can get it back when you want it. And you need to have several ways by which you can retrieve it. I've learned this, you see, because I'm not a librarian, I wasn't trained as a historian to file information and to get it back when I want it, but that to me is the key thing. You may want to retrieve it by subjects, that's the thing where people call on the telephone and want to know, "Do you have an interview on such-and-such." That's the reason for the subject index that we have. And it's really outdated. Because what I want to do is to have a database on the computer so I can ask the computer and the computer tells me what I have. Now that's what we're working for. But you have to start somewhere. We're still doing horse-and-buggy, unfortunately. We should be on the computer.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Have you found it neccessary to copy certain tapes just simply because that particular interview or series of interviews would be devastating if you lost it? What about back-up tapes?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes. That's what you should do. That's what you should do. I am a one-fourth time

operation. That is, I teach three classes and do a hundred other things. When I had a funded project, like the NEH project, we did a lot of that. And so I do have some back-up tapes. Ideally, and I think the major projects – I don't know about Johnye – but I know most of the major projects do have back-up tapes.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: No. I've always been very low budget. Do anything you want just as long as it doesn't cost much money. I knew that was advisable, a good idea, but I have not.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Oral history processing is a very high-cost adventure. It really is, to maintain it. And that's one of the reasons why yesterday I said if you're organizing a project, the best thing is to try to organize it with an organization like with a library. Because then you have an institution that can maintain the tapes and transcriptions in a manner in which they can be retrieved. If it's an individual project, and you have it in your home, that's why I would say encourage people to get with an institution. And we are sort of, this year reorganizing at Jackson State so that we will be in a position to be more organized in terms of the institutional setting with a library but not a part of the library so that there's a staff there who could maintain it. Like now, there's nobody in my office who could give you something if you

wanted it. You see what I'm saying? If I'm not there, if I'm in class, there's nobody to do it. So I think it's best to be with an established institutional setting

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: So your university library doesn't do that?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: No. They were not a part of it initially. And since it's so small and overworked, they're not anxious to become a part. For example, they don't have an archivist. You see, Jackson State is a small state, historically Black school. And we still, although this is the age of integration, we operate as though it's the age of segregation. I mean in terms of financing and we still are relatively at the same place we were before. In terms of what's available to us. But that's another issue.

Now you have this sheet, the processing sheet. You can ask me any questions there, why this or why that. But it's simply a process. I work with student workers who come in at various hours. And at one time it worked very well when I had a paid transcriber there who could monitor them. But now it really does not work very well. And that's why this year I've insisted on trying to do something differently and we're very serious about it. I thought that the setup that I found at the – was it the Shelby County Library? – yesterday would be ideal, I think because you have a

continuous institution there that can maintain it. At one time, before I had the experience that I have now, I may not have said that. But I understand the significance of having the institutional base that's going to be in the community for a while.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: You were talking about the Memphis Room, right?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes, is that where I was? Okay. The Memphis Room. And I think that we need those kinds of responsible institutions in the community that's going to maintain them. That's my experience.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Even if you have a connection with a responsible institution, you sometime have to defend your project. You were asking about back-up tapes. A few years ago we had a reorganization of our institution, totally, and the oral history program was no longer independent. It was taken over by the history department. And they funded it. They give it a thousand dollars, budget, every year.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: That's better than none.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: That's better than none, but what they're really saying is, "We don't really think it's

very important so we're not going to go out and hustle for money." It had a pretty respectable budget and was one of the fastest-growing in the country before that event. And we have an archivist now but we didn't for a long time. But the archivist says, "Do not bring us your materials unless they're already transcribed and ready for accession because we do not have money to pay for that. We will not do anything except give it an accession number and keep it in the archives." And the person who's one of our upper-echelon administrators – they just go up and up – but who at the time was chairman of the History Department, when this change took place, asked me, when they were going to take over everything, couldn't we re-use the tapes. And I said, "Absolutely not."

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Did you turn your tapes over to that person?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Not the best ones. I gave him the ones that those freshman students did. That were not terribly exciting. But they do have some good stuff in them. I have used the contents of those tapes in papers at professional meetings. But at any rate, you know, you have to be judicious.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Any questions?

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: The transcribers. Have either of you had the experience of the transcribers wanting to

correct certain things on the tapes rather than transcribe as it is?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Well, yes. Sometimes. Well, my policy is this, that my transcribers need to make sentences. A few starts and stops are okay, but my position is that if you have too many, it mars the flow of the readability of the transcription. So I do permit those that I have confidence in to make full sentences, and if you have five or six false starts where the person is really thinking, my initial position was, put all of that in there, everything. Verbatim transcription. But I have changed. And I feel that to work for a readable transcription is going to be better than to have one that has a lot of false starts, and we also correct English for most people.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: You do?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: A lot of people don't do this, I know. You have to decide your own individual philosophy in terms of doing that.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I decide it project by project.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I guess it depends upon the project that you're doing.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Each project is consistent. My problem has been the other way around. The year that I

was doing the Fort Chaffee things. Fort Chaffee is a hundred and fifty miles from Little Rock so I would have to teach a couple of days and then I would go – four days, I guess – and then I would go on Thursday evening and be there for Friday and Saturday and sometimes Sunday. So I was leaving tapes to be transcribed in my office. I had a half-time secretary I shared her with the Philosophy Department and they were very aggressive. They were bringing these mounds of typing. "Would you do this for me." So we finally had to have this understanding. I did get a work-study student to come and do initial transcribing and then the secretary would do final copy. We didn't have computers in those days. And I discovered that the girl who was doing the initial transcribing was a lousy speller. I mean awful speller. And so I have about fifty transcripts on women's projects where ordinary words are misspelled. So they would be an embarrassment to ever come out. And then we changed secretaries while I was gone as well. The Philosophy Department went ahead and approved this person who was sent by, and she too was a lousy speller The girl who had done the initial transcription – I was using the authentic verbatim transcript process at the time – and she would go in and she said, "Type it just like I typed it." So every lousy misspelling is in there So I've got to go back through those pseudo-final transcripts I have to go

back through, edit, audit check, and edit the tapes, before they can ever be processed. I do my own transcribing a lot now

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: You're talking about the transcriptions that you alter. What about the tapes? Could you go over that again?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I only did that with one tape.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I don't alter tapes at all.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: No one does, except me. I did that one.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Few people will alter the tape. The reason why I don't try to do verbatim transcriptions, like I said, is for readability. And for those scholars who want to have the word as it is spoken, we preserve the tape for them, so it's available to them.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: I just wanted to enquire about that, because you were talking about that yesterday. Isn't it essentially the difference between the spoken word and the written word? And you just have a somewhat different language? I think that's what you were pointing out yesterday. I just wanted to make sure that's what you meant.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes. That's what I am intending to say

now. See, if you're a researcher and you're looking for certain information, particularly historians, you're not interested in all those false starts and the gramatical errors that the person made. But if you're a linguist, you may be interested in all that, or if you're a folklorist. Or maybe if you're doing it in gerentology or as a psychologist who is looking for the condition of a person and how they spoke and that kind of thing. So the tape is there for that purpose and should be preserved for that purpose.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Yes. I always preserve the tapes.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: That's why I don't try to make the transcription be the same thing, but have utility for the scholar.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Yes, I do too. And so many of our projects have been biographical of local people who had folkloric materials in them and those we don't do much, except for Paul Starr's. If somebody will begin a sentence and interrupt and then begin the same sentence again, you might take out the first beginning, just because it drives a researcher up the wall. This is Edward Ives' book. I don't know whether you had a copy of this yesterday. Did you?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: No.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Edward Ives is a folklorist and he transcribes verbatim. And he was one of my mentors at the Oral History Association. So I began doing that verbatim. I have discovered that there's also a process known as audit checking. After the transcript has been made, then someone, usually either the interviewer or the project director, or somebody who is careful about such things should listen to the tape and read the transcript at the same time, before the final typed copy is made. Because a secretary will sometimes mis-hear something. This is particularly bad with speakers of a different ethnic group from the transcriber. I had to, every time we had a Black speaker. We had a white transcriber. She'd say, "I cannot get this word." She'd go back over and over and it would be something very simple I'd go and listen. Because chances are I had done the interview so I knew what the theme was, anyway. And when we got to the Vietnamese project, it took three weeks for my regular secretary, who was very good at transcribing, to get one short interview done. Because she had not spent six months listening to their accents, as I had. Every weekend I went to Fort Chaffee. And I got to the point where my ear was pretty good. Besides, I had lots of music training in my background, so I had learned to listen for sounds. And I knew what we were talking about, and the gist of

I have some release forms that I have done for various purposes that I thought you might want to see. I keep changing them because the law keeps changing and I keep using things for different purposes. This last one, I learned to do when I took photojournalism. You have to have a release form from your model and if it's a child, or if there's a child in the picture, you have to have a guardian or parent's permission for that to ever be published in a book as well.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: My publisher, my journalism class would tell you that. That was the early one, I'm sorry it's so dim, but we had both a restricted and a non-restricted form. But if you happen to have only the non-restricted – the ordinary one – with you and somebody says "I don't want this to be used, until my mother dies and she will probably be dead in ten years." So you put that little note on the side and you initial it and you have the person sign it. This is the one I did for my most recent project which I'm doing for myself, I'm funding it myself, and it's my usage, so it gives me the rights to everything, rather than an institution. But it gives me the right to also deposit my collection in an institution of my choice. You know it might not be my university because I might find one that has a collection on that subject and I want

things to be accessible. So everything that I have done, I have tried to put a provision so that both the tape and the transcript could be sent through interlibrary loans to people who wanted it. Because it cost a fortune to go to libraries, and you might not find anything you needed anyway. So if you can get it, and you know we wouldn't send the only copy we had, we would send a xerox through interlibrary loan. It just makes a lot of sense to me. I'm the only person I know who does this, but I do.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Okay, should tapes be transcribed?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: As a historian, I'd say yes. But I don't know that you need to make an obligation to transcribe everything because sometimes you may get an interview that might not be a priority for transcribing. You might feel that it's not as useful as some others. So in your statement, if you have a community project, you might not want to commit yourself to transcribing every single interview because as surely as you do, the person as you didn't intend to transcribe may come and ask to see the transcription, or ask "Why didn't I receive one?"

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Do you deposit with the person a copy of his or her transcript?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes. I give them a copy once it's finished.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: No

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: You don't give them a copy?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I don't, and I'll tell you why. Because I told you I've always been a low-budget operation, and it used to cost ten cents a page to make a xerox copy. I could probably do it cheaper than that now, but still, it takes my time or I have to borrow and paper and all of that, so I don't offer to do it. The Vietnamese – there were two hundred of them, and only one of me, and very little money We paid for the project, but not for the follow-up

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: That's like we said yesterday, you have to define your project, what it is you're going to do that fits your particular need.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I'm going to pass around copies, most of you may have seen this already, there's the initial questionaire that the CCC people sent out and a transcribed copy. Now I didn't do the transcription, but it's supposedly verbatim. Women – wives of the men – did them. We paid them for it. And this is done by students in a graduate course that did follow ups and other people that they had selected to be interviewed that were not part of that initial consult. This one is indexed, not really indexing. You couldn't go from this

directly to the tape and in five minutes find the portion you want. It just gives you the general subject areas which is not as helpful as the transcription. Quite frankly, I have been to a lot of libraries and I have never yet listened to a tape except some that Jack Hurley made of women in Mountain View, Arkansas, talking about the nineteen-thirties. I called Jack and said, "Would you please select one for me that would fit my women in the nineteen-thirties in Arkansas, because I want to include Mountain View, that area." And he said, "Okay I'll send you Lucy Johnson," and he made that copy of the tape and sent it to me, because they had not been transcribed. They're folklore and music. He was collecting music, and you know transcription is not a priority for that.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Does anyone have any questions about transcription and editing techniques?

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Local color, regional expressions, regional emphasis in speaking are things that attract me and I think they should be preserved because I think that for that reason I'm asking you this question. You keep it in your tape, but in your transcription, how do you handle that? Especially if you got somebody who can't spell.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Regional expressions are transcribed.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Yes

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: As is?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes, Yes, we don't change that kind of thing It's only the grammar and the readability but you don't change the meaning of any.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: It has to do with grammar?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Well, I use a sample of that bad grammar or whatever the problem might be. But a non-trained reader or scholar is not going to catch some of that. I'll do a page or two with the d's left off of the past tense so that they'll get the flavor of it, but I put a note on it that this has been done and then that the rest of it has been standardized. But if you are a speech-oriented person and you need that for speech purposes, you can go to the tape, because I'm not a linguist to trancsribe that way.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: I think you lose something if you don't use the original.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: She said they tape it. But the transcription . . . ?

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Yes, but I said even in the transcription, suppose that they had taped Lawrence

Dunbar, and it hadn't printed it like that, then it would not have been passed on authentically is what I'm saying.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Well, I think you have a very good point there.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: But there is also a problem in actually transcribing the sounds because as all of us Southerners know, "y'all" is spelled various other ways in other parts of the country.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: That's right, that's true. It's hard to find those persons who really want to sit there and transcribe.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: One thing we have not told you in case you're beginning, it takes a minimum, or an average, I guess, of eight hours to transcribe a one-hour tape and that's if you have no dialect problems, and that's the first transcription – that's before you go back and audit check and get out the problems. And you have to constantly stop and hopefully you'll have a machine you can buy for about four hundred and fifty or five hundred dollars, a secretarial transcriber. Sony make one, I.B.M. has one, Norelco makes one that will transcribe a standard-sized cassette. You can also, for another two hundred and fifty dollars – I own the whole works –

buy a little inset that will allow you to transcribe the little tiny cassettes. I own one of those and when I carry it with me and when I do a series of interviews, I talk into that as I'm driving home. I did that for my photojournalism internship that I did with a UPI photographer one year. I had to keep a journal to turn in to get my grade for the class. And I had ninety pages from my talks, just driving to my assignment and driving back. And then I had two tapes that are an hour and a half each that I talked into all the way across the desert into California and all the way up the coast of California when I was doing my Vietnamese follow-up in 1985. I would talk about things that we have talked about that they hadn't put on tape. Oh, we hadn't talked about turn off the tape. But you do when somebody says, you ask a question, they say, "Turn off the tape for a minute." What do you do?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: What do I do?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I usually turn it off. And then I explain the innocence of what we're about to do, and if they go ahead and put it on the tape, and they then decide that they really don't want it, you know, after it's transcribed, we'll close it. You know, as I did yesterday. You know, and actually when I was interviewing the one legislator, Representative Clarke, sometimes he would say, "Turn off the

tape," and then after he heard what he said, he would say, "Oh, it's all right. You can go ahead and keep that." Sometimes they think they may say something that's really going to be incriminating or they may not should say, politically, and then once they hear they realize that I really didn't say it because they probably hedged a little bit in the first place. You know, it was just what they were saying. But, I really try to convince them to let me go ahead and do it. Sometimes they really insist and I turn it off they tell me and I say let's go ahead and put this on tape. Well, and they may.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Yes, you have to go with the interviewee's wishes. You try to talk them out of it but you can look at their faces and if they are really hurting, they're distraught, but they say, "Turn off the tape." They want you somehow to understand this point and it is important to them to get it out of their systems. I was talking with one Vietmanese man and he had been, he had made a trip to China, ostensibly to study at a cultural museum and he literally had done those things, but when I, and I knew that because they had told me, his wife had told me about it the day before. So I wanted to put that on the tape, so I asked him that question, and there were other people in the house. They weren't right in the room with us, but his voice

tell, and he looked at me, you know, very intimately, the way that, this is a secret between just you and me. I want to tell you but I'm not telling the world. And he insisted that I turn off the tape, and I thought, well he's already told me this so why should I turn off the tape, but I did just to find out what was bothering him because obviously something was. And he said, (whisper) "I didn't go to China to study. I went to try to get the Chinese to help the Nationalists. I was trying to get them to come and fight the war." And he said, (whisper) "And my wife doesn't know that. I'm afraid if she finds out she won't like me anymore." And I, well I, see I had a whole lot of other people who were Nationalists who had told me about their activities. And when we were at Chaffee in '75, they literally believed that the Nationalists were going to come back and get an army from somewhere and they were going to defeat those communists.

Well, you know, ten years later you would think it would be an issue that would not even be important any more but obviously it was, so I didn't destroy his life. But I know that information and it's on my little tape were I talked to him in my car and after that man is dead I will put that somewhere in an archive because I'm going to write up my journal, but I won't make it those things available until later, because the initial project, we promised them we were doing this for their grandchildren who

would not know what it was like to grow up in Vietnam or to be a first-generation immigrant and so that we know people don't have that information any more. This is the only time we can get it for them and for us.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Okay. Were there any other questions about transcribing and editing techniques? I'd like to recommend this little book, Transcribing and Editing Oral History by Willa Baum. It's very good. It has a lot more in it as well. But Bill Moss has also done a book, and my book had disappeared so I couldn't find it, that you might want to purchase. He's at the Smithsonian. If you write to Bill Moss, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., I'm sure you will get it eventually. It's in the, what they call the ANI Building at the Smithsonian He's heading an archives project there, at least he was last summer. But he has a book that came out since Willa Baum's book and his reflects his experiences with the Kennedy Library, the oral history. He was also president of the Oral History Association at one time. But Willa Baum's book is very good. It has a record that helps the students with the transcription so that's one of the reasons why I like to use it.

I guess the first thing to do if you have a transcriber – this is one of the things I say to the students. Listen to the tape first, get familiar with

the person who's talking. Try to understand the dialect. So I have them go through the whole thing and then listen to short parts of it, try to type a sentence at a time, and then they soon develop their own rate of transcription.

You don't have to have a transcriber. You can do that with the tape recorder. A lot of people transcribe with the tape recorder so I didn't want you to feel that you had to invest in a transcriber but they're good to have. Editing techniques, as an English professor, you could probably deal with that better. I have a sheet that I should have brought along that tells the students generally what to do in terms of editing. Of course, regular punctuation is important. And the only thing that I can think of that may be different in terms of oral history is the way you treat the false starts in terms of editing. And they use the – what is it called? – ellipses? The three dots for the false starts. Otherwise it's the same English gramatical techniques in terms of editing, unless there's something different that you do?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: No, I do that.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I have had students who come in and just type it straight, no paragraphing. You have to have a kind of sense of when the topic has changed. But I have not asked

a new question. I talk to students about making sure the subject has changed at the paragraph. Just like in English, it is changed. We write the narrator's last name out. And the interviewee's last name out. I noticed on here you have "Question" and "Answer."

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Uh, well, I didn't do this.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Different techniques for doing the transcription itself.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Right. Well, I guess they are all the same. I have some transcripts I have done. Let me show you the good ones. (Laughter) Those are the amateurs.

These are from the Vietnamese refugee project. As a matter of fact, I have one, an interview by Dr. Charles W. Crawford, here with one of the American camp officials, and I personally did this transcription. Since I was doing the Vietnamese refugee, I got paid for the transcribing. And that is a first draft. The yellow pages are the first draft. I use long paper because I was still using a typewriter and you don't have to change the paper as often and I went all the way to the foot of the page. But then on the final copy, this one, the white is the final copy. Sometimes I used the full last name of the interviewee, it seems, but I used the initials of the interviewer. It takes forever to type those names, and when you have a lot

of questions, and it just extends.

One of the interviews which I have done myself with a Buddhist monk, a Vietnamese monk, it took me twenty-three hours to transcribe the first draft.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: It's just time consuming. And see you can imagine if you're paying somebody five dollars an hour, so it's a very expensive process there. Computer versus the typewriter? All I can say is, I wish I had one and I think it would be faster.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: It's wonderful.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I know it would save a hundred steps. Could you talk about that? I know Dr. Crawford said he could speak to that issue. Did you? Did you not? Computers versus typewriters in terms of using it for transcription?

DR. CHARLES CRAWFORD: My secretary does, and she swears it's better.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Yes.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Right.

DR. CHARLES CRAWFORD: Any transcribing I do is done with a typewriter.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: My rough drafts are not rough. They are almost final typed copy because I had typing in high school and I was very good at it. I also played the piano. But any correction that needs to be made you can do it right then so you don't have to retype the entire page or the entire transcript for your second draft. You just do it right on there. But you need to back up, everybody who uses a computer knows that, on your floppy disk or whatever kind of disk you have, frequently. The Bessie Moore project I did on the computer. These are rough drafts. I'll let you see those. I did a final print-out that was pretty, for the library. But I have a note on one of them that this is where it froze and I managed not to lose everything and I'll tell you how. I have two computers. I have not one but two. I bought one for the office and then our department bought some so I didn't take it to the office and it's wonderful. I have an Apple. The //e. As soon as it came out I got the //e. And then the //c came out and it's so neat. You can take it with you and when I go across country, especially in the car, to do interviews. It's dull and boring because I don't know anybody there and you know there's a Holiday Inn the world round so you can take this little thing and type. You can take it to the archives and type. Just plug it in and you can type and you can save it on your disk and you don't have to spend your money

xeroxing or take notes. So I had the one-twenty, I mean the whatever that is, the new one. And the old one froze. I kept transcribing and got it to the point that I was about to lose everything but I had saved up until the last few lines, just before that, because I did it every few minutes.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: You save every few minutes?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I learned to do that. So what I did was take the disk out and put it in the new, in the //c, which has a higher memory. It has double the memory of the //e. When I discovered that, I went down and got the same memory put on my //e. It cost me a hundred and fifty dollars to have a card put in. That now lets them be compatible. Fortunately,if I hadn't had that //c or if I hadn't thought to do that, I would have lost the whole blooming interview and done it all over again.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: That's the only frightening thing about computers. People talk about, "Well, I had done my whole essay and I lost it." I'd hate for that to happen, but to do it every two or three minutes will . . .

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Uh no, not every two or three, every twenty, fifteen to twenty.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: You save it?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Right. You know, twenty minutes of your life is not that big a deal. But twenty-three hours is a whole lot.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Let's say library storage of tapes and transcriptions. The only thing we do in terms of the archives, I'm thinking about state archives, is when we have major funded projects, we give them a copy of the transcription and our library gets a copy of all of our transcriptions. They do not get the tapes. If we had a better total system, I would prefer to keep the tapes here in this office, because I think they have a better facility. But I would recommend strongly to community projects that they be kept with major libraries if possible, because they're going to be more accessible to more people in that manner and I strongly believe that that is the reason for getting involved in oral history. I hate to see people take it as this is the little fad thing to get into now. "Let's go interview somebody. Let's start an oral history project." We need to see that we are creating something for the future and that we need to take that kind of responsibility and care about the product that is created and put it with institutions that are going to preserve those tapes and make them accessible to our grandchildren and scholars of the future. So that's why I would encourage

you to utilize the archives and libraries for both the tapes and transcriptions.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Let me give you a word of warning about just handling tapes. You never, ever, ever put a tape close to a magnetic field or an electrical source of some sort, because it will erase your tape. We have a classic story in the Oral History Association of someone who had gone from New York to Washington, I think it was and had a major interview and he rode a train that was electrical, a subway or something, and the tape was in his briefcase which he put up on a rack overhead which was right under that little line which carries the electricity, and it erased it

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: A train that goes from New York?

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: It obliterated his whole tape. I had one interview where a secretary plugged in a fan on the other side of a wall and you cannot hear one thing. My recorder was plugged in to the opposite side of that wall and the electric sound – I don't know what it did. When she turned on her fan, the sound came back through the electrical system.

Let me tell you about the most fun thing I ever had. I'm the only person I know of this has ever happened to but I was literally transcribing

those Vietnamese tapes in my apartment one night and there was a terrific rainstorm going on in the area, and while I was listening to this person tell me how he got out of Vietnam and was on this little tiny boat, thought he was going to lose his children out there on the boat, I heard an Eastern Airlines pilot contacting some airport somewhere. Apparently my apartment building was built of concrete and steel and it had an antennae to pick up, I guess, radio as well as TV waves and storms do strange things. Eastern doesn't even come to Little Rock. But it picked it up, served as an antenna, and I listened in on the conversation. I thought, "Well, isn't that interesting."

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: I guess these electronic things can do useful things for us.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: I did not transcribe that, however. I may have put a note in the transcript at the point where it happened.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Okay. We're down to the last point. We're trying to cover all of these and hopefully you're asking your questions, whatever they are, as we go along. And we have about seven or eight more minutes. And it says here, "Use of interviews in Publications." We've already talked about that, I think. But

"Historic preservation and public programs." I've used it in terms of historic preservation. I think I explained that earlier, with the Ferris Street Historic District in terms of historic preservation

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Well now this was to document . ?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: To document the historic nature of the neighborhood. And the buildings.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: To collect the information?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: To collect the information about the significance of the buildings and the area?

And I know that people in the Department of Archives and History, though they may not call it oral history, they go out and they interview people about the significance of structures, frequently. They're not recorded, but that could be a source of rich history. They make notes of it and I guess it goes back to what we were saying yesterday. Dr. Crawford was talking about the history of oral history and Dr. Hill referred to that in her lecture on Sunday evening. And we still use oral history in that manner, to just collect the information, the data, and frequently people don't realize that this really is an oral history interview and could be taped. But frequently they just put it in terms of notes and use it in that manner. But there have been a number of public programs where people have interviewed persons

Don't you have one – the library project here, wasn't there a public radio program?

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: WMC? Quite frequently the oral history programs came from radio programs. There was even was one that's from WFVI, which was a small radio station here.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: One of the national programs that I was familiar with had to do with interviewing migrants. I've forgotten the young man's name. He worked out of the Smithsonian Institution for a while. He was doing the programs about migrants to Pennsylvania. That was a whole series of programs that was done on the radio about persons who had migrated to the Northern cities, where they came from and why they came and the kinds of conditions they found. So I think it all speaks to the fact that there are unlimited uses for oral history, it just depends on your imagination and how you want to use it for that purpose. Johnye, do you have anything else you want to share? You ask us questions now about anything.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: I'm not sure if you've covered this but I'm in the midst of the beginning of a project. In other words, I know what the parameters are and I am considering cooperative efforts with one or more institutions. Do you have any

recommendations you will make in terms of state historical applications for humanities grants. Do you have any experience?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: An organization that you would cooperate with?

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Would probably be a library and a college. Because I am with the Public Library

DR. ALFERTEEN HARRISON: Well, the Public Library System itself could apply for the grant.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: But share any experience you have had

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: The experience we had with the Ferris Street Historic District project is that it was community projects that we wanted to work with an organization that was in the community. And we worked through the YWCA. The Marino Branch YWCA was in the middle of the Ferris Street Historic District so the other organization was the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, because we were interested in working with their Historic Preservation Office as well as the historical museum. They had all of the facets that we were interested in working with. And so we formed a consortium. And the heads of those organizations assigned individuals to work with me and then we organized the community committee

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: I've seen your project . . .

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Oh, yes. Thank you.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: . . . when you first opened.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: It was very important to have the community leaders as a part of the overall project committee and we held community meetings so that they could suggest other individuals who were interested in working on the project. And then we just applied for a grant. They decided that since I was the project director and had initiated the project that the funds should come to Jackson State, so that their persons were paid from Jackson State.

When we received the money, we formed another committee made up of persons who were going to actually implement the project and we involved other community agencies like Mississippi Museum of Art and we involved the city itself in the project. The mayor was on the committee. And this turned out to be very instrumental for the Smith-Robertson Museum. Because the mayor was impressed. We received a hundred thousand dollars from NEH to work on the Ferris Street Historic District. And we said to the mayor that whatever was collected from the project – the community decided this – that it should be left in the community rather than us taking it to Jackson State. So that's why the exhibit ended

up in the Smith-Robertson Museum, and so this did a lot for the community, because they felt ownership of it and it was like Jackson State coming, and these other agencies, to help that community. And thus the city could turn around and invest a lot of money in the project. So it's like a living thing. It's not something that we did and was dropped. It's a continuous kind of thing.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Would you speak to those community meetings? I guess this is where I've gotten stuck, in terms of envisioning where I want to go with it because MIFA's been so people-oriented that I wanted to do something like that but I also thought that that might be beyond actually the scope of my energy. You felt that was productive to have the community meetings?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes!

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: What kind of participation did you have?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: We sent out notices, we sent out fliers, we put it in the newspaper. The persons on the committee were almost always there. Other persons would come from time to time. That varied.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: What did you seek to accomplish there?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Well, the first thing we asked them was

what did they feel was the most important thing in the community to be dealt with. They wanted to involve the citizens there in something. If the money came, they wanted the people there in the community to get some of the money. So that's when we said we'd have workshops for individuals in the community so that they could learn what the oral history was so that oral history workshops that we held were for the people in the neighborhood

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Like the photo workshops?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes. All of them. We started with oral history. The Architecture Workshop, the Photographic Workshop, and the Exhibition Workshop. The members of the workshops were people in the community. They were paid a small fee. It was something like twenty-four dollars a person for attending, let's say, ten sessions. They didn't have to pay anything, we paid them. As it turned out, not many of the citizens participated. But in the summer the workshop was primarily teenagers. We did have, I think, five community residents who actually participated in all the workshops all the way through. They're the ones who collected the oral history. I did a lot of the interviews myself, but they did interviews.

They would say, "Well, Dr. Harrison, I can't interview this person. You

go interview the person." And it just worked me to death, really.

But they collected photographs. They were very, very vital in collecting the photographs. They could get into people's homes that I could not get into. They could get things for the exhibit that I could not get. And they could get people to give things that I knew they had. And that's how we got a lot of things from the community, because they were involved in every step. When the museum was organized, some of those persons were put on the board. And they are always, even to this day, the best reference point in that community. Those persons who were involved with the project. And we have to give a lot of credit to the people. Ms. Jones who headed the "Y" was very vital to the project because she worked there for about twenty years, right in that neighborhood and she could say, "Well, this is okay."

The other thing we we did when we got a supplemental grant from the Mississippi Committee for the Humanities was that we held all of these workshops in community organizations in the neighborhood. They were not held on Jackson State's campus. They were held in the churches there and the YMCA. So that when we held it in the YMCA I put as a project director the head of the YMCA. So they were responsible for getting the people there that day and they could do anything they wanted to. They could

invite. We always had somebody who would sing, a group of community people. So it was their project and they felt like it was theirs.

But it also meant that I worked eight days a week all the time. You give more than you're paid for in terms of any project like that. But it also took the energy so that I don't have it to give to another project in the manner that I gave to that one. But any time you're working with a community like the Ferris Street Historic District was, you have to be willing to give and to abide by their wishes. There were people at the University who felt that the exhibits should have been at Jackson State and we should have been collecting the artifacts. But since the community decided that this is what they wanted to do – it was almost like they said, "Oh, she's not going to do that because they have all that money and we really don't have any control over it."

But we told the mayor that the people wanted to have the exhibit and the things we had collected left in the community and we said, "Well, now, the only way we can do this is that the city develops the building for the Smith-Robertson Museum." Well, it took a lot more than us saying it. There were other influential people who spoke to the mayor and said, "Yes, this should occur." Well, to make a long story short, the city threw the present mayor, who is falling out of favor now, but anyway, he committed

a million dollars to that project

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: Holy cow! No wonder you send them a copy of the transcript! (Laughter)

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: No, but really, they did. And see, but the city owns the building.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: In my first project on this woman senator that I told you I went to Washington, I went to Phoenix. I got a hundred dollars from my university for that whole project.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: But it didn't come to us, it didn't come to anybody. It was a commitment by the city to develop this facility for the community. See, we don't have a Black museum in the State of Mississippi. And that's the way we sold the project.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: The thing called the Ferris Street Festival that draws us down there.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: You have a . . .?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes, that's going there.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Always going in September.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes, people are coming and this is really going to be developed and the city has taken a great interest in developing Black culture because it's been totally neglected and frequently we have all this industry coming in from the outside or Northerners or non-Southerners coming in and they want to know about Black culture. Blacks come in as visitors and they want to see, "Well what about the Black culture?" And there's nothing to show. And Smith-Robertson is a good showplace, you know. We need a lot more

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Do they go to the campus to find anything?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes. But see, Smith-Robertson is right there within two blocks of walking distance of the capitol. It's right in the city. It's going to be a very positive thing for the city. So it's not that we were putting their backs against the wall for something that was really not going to pay off. It's a worthwhile thing and that's what sold the project, that it was something that needed to be done. It was totally legitimate. We had as much of the white community supporting the project as the Black community because archives and history, these are your historic preservation people in the city and naturally that helps to develop their thing. That's a feather in their bonnet. So I think it just made for a good project. It's a wonderful

project. You have made a commitment to a way of life, as a matter of fact, and it involves you and much more than just the initial oral history part of it. But that's where oral history can lead you. Because that's really how it all started. And there still is a lot of interest in Jackson in that particular project. I'm not on the board of Smith-Robertson any more it just takes itself along. I simply cannot do it and maintain my job because they never paid me, you see what I'm saying? I couldn't be down there every day, and when I resigned they thought it was the worst thing that could have happened but I had to explain to them, I had to resign for my preservation. I couldn't work down there full-time and maintain my job and my family. They had a director and they depended on me still. And she needed me out of the way. I think it's just good sense that one knows how to get out of the way and let it go on. They call me for advice and I do give recommendations. I work on committees. We had a fund-raiser this summer and they hired a lady who's an up and coming Black lady there and she said, "Well, we want to have this funded. Why don't we just ask three of the banks to underwrite it." And they did. (Laughter) So it's going They don't need me. You see what I'm saying? So I think it really will go.

DR. JOHNYE STRICKLAND: That's what happened with that Bessie Moore project. The woman who decided that

Bessie Moore should have a biography done for the state sesquicentenial was on the state board to do something to celebrate the sesquicentenial. Bessie was on the board too, to raise funding for it. And the woman who got the biography funded was a vice-president of a bank. So she just went to the bank and said, "You know, this is a good woman. She's done all this for the state. We should do this." So she got the money for the project.

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes. See, that's the way it is with Smith-Robertson now. And I think that we'll still go.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: You still have a senior citizens section there?

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: Yes, yes. It really does . . .

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: [Question inaudible].

DR. ALFERDTEEN HARRISON: That's true. I guess our time is up.

[End of session.]

WOMEN OF COURAGE ORAL HISTORY CONFERENCE, NOVEMBER 15-17, 1987.
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

NOVEMBER 17, 1987: 1:00 P.M. "BEGINNING YOUR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT." CHAIRED BY CLAUDETTE NICHOLS. PANEL MODERATED BY DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL. PANEL MEMBERS: PROF. FANNIE DELK, LEMOYNE-OWEN COLLEGE, BLACK WRITERS WORKSHOP; DR. JAMES JOHNSON, DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, MEMPHIS PUBLIC LIBRARY; REV. HAROLD CHANDLER, C.M.E. CHURCH HISTORICAL SOCIETY. TRANSCRIPTION BY J. DOUGLAS SIMS

CLAUDETTE NICHOLS: Would you move closer, those of you that are seated at the back because we don't have the use of a microphone and we would like for the panelists to be audible? I'm Claudette Nichols and I've had the delightful pleasure of working with Jeanne Dreifus and Dr. Crawford and Dr. Black on the formulation of this very extraordinary conference that we have been involved in over the past two days.

It is said often that the witness of the past lives on in the present and I think that came alive to us as we heard our program participants this morning share their experiences as it has related to oral history and the importance of preserving our history. I'm certainly happy on this occasion to have the opportunity to present our panelists this afternoon each of which possess a high measure of expertise and competence in the discipline of history and specifically in the development of oral history

projects. Not only do they have the technical expertise but certainly the verve and the courage to share in the responsibility of preserving history.

Our moderator for this afternoon will be Dr. Ruth Edmonds Hill of Radcliffe College. Our panelists, Professor Fannie Delk, LeMoyne-Owen College, Black Writers Workshop; Dr. James Johnson, Director of the Department of History, Memphis Public Library; and Rev. Harold Chandler, the C.M.E. Church Historical Society.

You are invited now to share with our panel.

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: The title is Beginning Your Oral History Project, but I just spoke a few minutes ago to the panelists, and we're going to go a little bit beyond just beginning your oral history projects. Fannie Delk is going to talk about the Black Writers Workshop and the idea of preserving history for our children. And James Johnson will be talking about the acquisitions of oral history materials for the Memphis Public Library, and Harold Chandler will talk about his dealing with church history, oral history and church history. And I guess we might as well just take people in the order in which our names are on the program. And so we'll take perhaps ten to fifteen minutes from each speaker and then questions from the audience at the end.

PROFESSOR FANNIE DELK: How's everybody? Is that loud enough? Usually, I have a very, very loud voice, but sometimes when I'm out of my own home territory apprehension sets in. So I hope that I'll be able to be the voice of Memphis Black Writers Workshop. It is not my own voice that I'm assuming today though I fear I will step out of character and, in fact, assume some of my own voice since I am listed among the founding members of Memphis Black Writers Workshop. Our workshop was founded in April 1980 so we're still, you might say, in the infant stage and we are very anxious to find out during this oral history conference and during other such conferences, either by corresponding with those who have held workshops or in other ways, how we at Memphis Black Writers based on the campus at LeMoyne-Owen College can, in fact, do more to learn more about oral history thus carrying out some of our goals.

We were founded by a group of creative writers, researchers, and lovers of literature. Since then, we like to call ourselves "The People." We are teachers, storytellers, Sunday School teachers, painters, photographers, librarians, writers, newspaper editors, reporters, TV anchors, TV administrators, musicians, ministers, preachers, theologians,

philosophers, and an Egyptologist. That's our number

Now, what do we do? If I had to give us one goal, I'd say that we exist partly to keep alive the oral tradition so important, so crucial to preserving the history, the heritage of our own people, even as did the ancient Greoles of Africa, the storytellers in urban America, the country preachers in rural America – the people, you might say. What must we tell our children? What must we do to prepare them and their children to keep the story alive? Who will teach them to keep alive for their children and for their children's children this cultural heritage that we like to talk about?

I believe that grass roots organizations such as Memphis Black Writers Workshop have a place in the scheme of things though, of course, we exist primarily as a support group being formed to encourage the writing talents of members. I don't find that any of us have ever been able to get at that mission except that we went the route of the oral. You know, we talked to people, we have set our goals to foster writing and appreciation of literature. We have tried to seek publishing outlets for our members, but more importantly, we have members who like to tell stories, for example. So we have activities where the members tell stories to

children.

We have other activities where the members for certain occasions like a recent "To Brave Black Families with Love" program to celebrate the Women of Courage exhibition. Our program was in South Memphis in several libraries, one being Gaston Park and another being South Branch of the public library, and a third that is going to take place November 28 at LeMoyne-Owen. So, at that time you will be stimulating, among other things, writing talents of young people.

We also have the goal set to collect the written works of Black Memphians. All these goals sound lofty, maybe out of reach especially for people who work all the time, but what we do is, we keep working at the goal. And I believe that that is really one of the ways that we get anything accomplished at all in Black Writers Workshop. Sometimes we are so burdened until we divide ourselves up. Three will go this way, three that way, and three the other way. And we manage to get back together and find out we have, in fact, pulled off another goal.

Another is to build a creative intellectual and archival center in the Memphis community. I was looking at an article in an old Crisis magazine the other day and I saw something that struck me and that hit me, "Well,

Memphis Black Writers might be able to do this one day, Fannie Delk." Not under my tenure, I am sure. I am the chairman, just been elected the chairman of Memphis Black Writers, but I wonder how the chairpersons ahead of me ever got the work done, trying to chase everybody and come ahead and say "Let's do this."

But as I started to say, I was looking at a back copy of the Crisis magazine, and I saw something that struck me. It was that Arthur Shumberg started the collection, the Center for Research in Black Culture, that we read so much about and that's national in scope with five thousand books, three hundred old and rare manuscripts, and two thousand etchings and portraits. And I thought to myself, that doesn't sound like so many. Well, especially when I think of that based right at LeMoyne-Owen College, where we are, we the Black Writers Group, have quarters there.

Well, there's a collection called the Sweeney Collection in the Hollis Price Library there and it started with about that number of volumes. We have some rare manuscripts. We have this, but we don't have anybody who can – any group, any community group – that would do volunteer work. Because somebody needs to spearhead this kind of work and when you look around and you say, "Well, I teach eighty-eight hours a week. What can I

do?" (Laughter) You know, I grade papers.

We have, thank goodness, a young professor, Dr. Blackburn in the audience, who has joined our English faculty and we're all just applauding underneath the table. She doesn't know what we have in store for her. (Laughter) But, nonetheless, I know she will soon. I think to myself, Memphis ought to have a Schumberg Center for Research. It ought to be something to go along with the Library up there. Maybe not in the public vein or in the public domain. Maybe it ought to be on the campus of a private Black college, who knows. So you see that the vision of Memphis Black Writers, for whom I speak today, and hope that I'm going to represent in truth, well, we have a good vision, I believe.

Now, we believe also that at the foundation of all that we do is the oral tradition. Though we don't see this oral tradition always, in the strictest, in the most academic sense, of that phrase. However, early in 1980, two Memphis Black Writers workshop projects during this very first year of our existence were deeply rooted in the oral tradition. One was that we organized a research project to examine the history of Blacks in the local community. That was oral strictly, all the way from interviews on to the final symposium that was presented, and at which Blacks in

education, politics, and the full range of Black life and thought presented, maybe, a backwards look or a forward glance, if you will, at how Blacks had, during the past twenty years, lived their lives in Memphis Tennessee.

Another was that we put together two mini-conferences. They were planning conferences funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities on oral history and grantsmanship. And Dr. Miriam Willis was instrumental in this. Dr. Charles Crawford, who is in the room, I know, and Mr. David Yellin came out and helped us. Dr. Crawford has probably even forgotten that, now, way back there in 1980. So we had the community come out to LeMoyne-Owen and we did a lot with oral history on those two occasions.

Recently we have worked at a project with WHBQ television station, especially with Sonya Walker, one of our members. We have pulled together, oh, I guess by now some fifty-five or more vignettes. And these vignettes, some of you may recall, are aired during Black History Month. Each year during Black History Month, there are the thirty-second and the sixty-second spots. They are more like commercials, but it's a way that we have gone out and we have done some interviewing to get after this. These Memphians are all deceased. I think the ground rule was that the person that we got should have been deceased five years or more. But

sometimes we'll go back on that, if we especially want to interview someone.

One person that has been interviewed, and I think this is appropriate during this Women of Courage, is Georgia Patton. This is one of Miriam Willis' projects. She's probably one of our most active women. I don't know how she does it. She and Mildred Green and Reuben Green, they are these active people. They can teach and they can grade papers and they can run to WHBQ and they can just do it all. I say that because I really do want them to keep on. (Laughter) Miriam started out, for example, you'll see here, with the scribbles. And she gets these scribbles from talking to people, talking to family members, going around to the colleges where the subject matriculated, to the high schools. She's driven as far as Stanton, Tennessee, brushing off the gravestones, and doing this and doing the other. And I think all have been very active in this. I'm going to hurry along. The final copy here is well, I'll send it through and let you see it. Down beside you see where the portraits, the pictures go. And these are what makes the vignettes. And I don't have a machine, because I knew we wouldn't have time to look at that. These are some of the portraits used, and of course, they show up this way on the vignettes. And I can send

around just this much of the copy so that you can see what came out of the final interviews.

Even more importantly has come something from a workshop member, and again, it's Miriam Willis. She couldn't get this person that she interviewed off her mind – Georgia Patton. So she had to finish the manuscript called "Georgia on My Mind." (Laughter) And we are extremely proud of Georgia. She said, "Georgia worried me, worried me, worried me," and so rather than a thirty-second spot, she kept up the interviews, she kept up the research until she has produced this manuscript, "Georgia on My Mind."

Another member upon looking at how a photographer handled some deceased photographers, responded to the call of the Memphis Academy of Arts, and that member is the present chairman, Fannie Delk. I was not into photography or even looking at it, didn't even have a Brownie camera. But after being impressed with the way photographers in the Black community fit into the struggle, the times, the South. And so the Memphis Academy of Arts came to the Memphis Black Writers Workshop to get someone to do this kind of thing and to work through a booklet of this sort. If you'd told me ten years before that I would be doing something in art photography, I

would have brushed you aside. But I did all of this with interviews, and that you can look at it later on if we have the opportunity.

Now there's a little poem, and I'm hurrying because I'm going to save some time. You may wish to know something more about how we actually pulled some of these projects together. So I'm going to save a little time at the end for the direct questions that always come out of a too-hurried presentation. There's a little poem by Lucille Quipton. Very short, I think it sums up the work of an oral history project such as the one that Memphis Black Writers always will take over. It's called "Listen, Children:"

> Listen, children, keep this in the place you have for keeping always.
> Keep it all ways. We have never hated black. Listen.
> We have been ashamed, hopeless, tired, mad, but always, all ways,
> We loved us. We have always loved each other, children, all ways.
> Pass it on.

And I think that is about the gist of what we do, though not so academic in all manners of speaking. I think the theme of it is, "Pass it on." And for our children, that is extremely important. Thank you.

(Applause)

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: My name is Jim Johnson and I work at the public library. I work in the History

Department and I want to share with you a couple of things that we try to do locally with our local history collection. If I would put it in the perspective of this entire collection, it gives you an option. You can either read what's there or you can listen to it. If you're like I am, you can't do both. But, my idea is that you can look at this and get an idea of what it is. In the Memphis and Shelby County Room we maintain records pertaining to the history of our entire community, of our whole community, of everyone who has been in our community and everyone who is now in our community. As is true with many local history collections, it is first of all based on books and pamphlets. That's traditional in libraries and it's traditional in the historical community, because this is what has been available for people to work in. As we are writing and recreating the happenings of our past, what we've had to rely upon, of course, is the printed word. And only in the last few years have we realized that there are other things that are available, other ways that we can try to get to the entire community. To get to those people who are maybe not quite as articulate in that field of scholarship as are some others.

And in the Memphis and Shelby County Room, incidentally, this is going to sound like an ad, but we do have a very good collection, as far as

we know, every book that's been published on Memphis, and every pamphlet that we can get our hands on that deals not only with Memphis but also with Memphians, people who have lived here and contributed in the past. We've added to that by having government and institutional reports and records that might be helpful in knowing what has happened in the past. And knowing what has happened in the past, once again, in our entire community. Social, economic, religious, any aspect of the community, various ways that we want to look at our past and try to figure out what we've done before hopefully to better understand why we are where we are right now. In addition to that we have a fine collection of maps, as you would expect any local history collection to have. Maps turn out to be tremendously helpful when we're trying to find out where things were, streets changing names and all sorts of things that are important in understanding just the geographic aspects of our past. The manuscript collection at the Memphis and Shelby County Room is a fine, really fine collection. Once again, it's printed. I mean printed, it's written word. It's the written word of letters that someone has written, memoirs that someone has, at the end of their life, sat down and thought of and passed on to posterity.

Just this last week, in fact, yesterday, before we came, we got a letter from a lady in Kansas, who for years and years and years, their family had kept letters of their great-great- grandfather who had moved to Memphis in 1860. And he's writing back home, to his wife, who's in Virginia. Now, what's he going to write about? He's going to write about some of the things he did, right? One of the things he wrote about was the horrible post office. He couldn't imagine why she hadn't received all of those letters he had been writing all those times. Reminds me of us talking about our post office now. But nonetheless, he told about the weather, how hot it was in the South compared to what it was back in Virginia. He told about business, the fact that Memphis was really booming. He was amazed at people in the South. The nature of the cotton business, actually. That you really worked real hard for a few months and you didn't work very hard, because not a lot of work came in so it – economically or business-wise, this is helpful to us.

But once again, it's the printed word that we're relying upon. Now for this conference, we're talking about the oral history collection. Photographs and the oral history collection are another aspect of our collection. And I've handed to you the Everett Cook Oral History Program

Finding Aid. And it's named Everett Cook simply because he funded it, he helped establish it. What we've done with this finding aid, we have gone through the collection as it existed at that time, made a list. We grouped all the similar items together, all the collections that came to us as a collection together, and then we've arranged them in such a way that you as a researcher can have access to that information. Also in the back, you'll notice, there is an index, and the index is to people who have been interviewed. So if you're interested in a particular person and you're wondering, do we have an oral history interview with that person, well then this lets you know if one does exist.

So with the oral history collection, we do our work in three ways. One, the development of the collection itself, encouraging people to give to us the oral histories that they have gone out in the community and worked on. We also, as librarians, encourage others to do the same thing. We try to have information available to them telling them how to go about doing an oral history, the legal releases that they need to have. Giving them information on how to do oral history even though we ourselves are not actively involved in preparing a program and going out into the community ourselves and doing the interviews. So, we try to encourage others to give

to us collections or oral histories that they have been working on, we try to encourage themes within the collection. We try to get people to go out in the community and say, tape Black churches, Black physicians, musicians, educators. Have a theme which a collection could be built upon with the idea that later on, someone can come, that if the information has been preserved, a scholar at a later time then can take this information and make use of it in trying to find out what we've done in the past. As far as our collection is concerned, we impress upon people that we do need to have legal releases. We have to have the release, and we have to have them have the one that's being interviewed and the interviewer both sign the release so that it is public. Because we, in order for us to accept something in the public library, it has to be available to the public. The public has to have the right and the availability of all the material.

That's what we try to do. That's our basic purpose, to have this information available to scholars, to college and high school students, and then to people like me, or just ordinary folks who want to know something about our past. And if we've done our job correctly, hopefully, we have narrowed down a part of the collection that they would like to listen to or the transcripts that they would like to read.

As far as the processing itself goes, it's just a – I won't say just a technical aspect, because it does take a lot of time. We put the materials in safe places. We place a transcript with the oral history tape, and then arrange it in such a way, with a finding aid so that a person who comes in will know what we have and then that information will be available to them. As librarians, of course, it's impossible for us, even though we might try to remember everything that we have. And so this is the purpose, of course, of the various finding aids that we have.

As far as the maintenance of the collection, we have a responsibility to the community. And that responsibility is that once the material is with us, that it has to be maintained in such a way that it will always be available to this generation, the next generation, and all the generations that follow. That's what we do at the Memphis and Shelby County Room, that's our goal, and oral history has been playing a larger and larger part in this goal of collecting information on the entire community, every aspect, so that we can understand what our community was and what it is now.

(Applause)

REV. HAROLD CHANDLER: I once heard somewhere that there are three types of people. There are people who make

things happen, there are people who stand on the side and watch things happen, and then there are those people who wonder why. So I'm one of the people that likes to make things happen.

A couple of years ago, Claudette Nichols called me and asked me would I speak to a group of women of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church who were coming to the headquarters here in Memphis for a historical meeting. And she asked me if I would share with them how to organize archives and collect history and so forth and I said, "Yes," thinking that that was just that one-time deal. So I shared with that group, and it was very interesting, and so, it was maybe about a year later that Claudette called me and said, "Now the Memphis group, the local group is beginning to organize and collect the history of the CME church, and with Tennessee, Jackson Tennessee, being the founding city of the CME Church, there's a lot of rich heritage here." So she said, "Would you come and share with the local historical committee."

And I said, "Yes, I'll do that." And so you get started in history and oral history by letting people know that you're interested in it, you're committed, and then as Dr. Harrison and Dr. Strickland said, that then you sort of become as a reference and people will constantly refer to you, but

I'd also like to say that it has been a real pleasure.

What I have attempted to do is to serve as a consultant for the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in helping them to pull together their archival works. And then recently we came up with the idea that it would be very rich to the heritage of the Church if we had oral interviews with the bishops of the Church. And to date we have gotten one bishop and that's the Right Reverend William H. Graves who presides over the First Episcopal District of West Tennessee and it was a very interesting experience and so we have committed ourselves to do the other bishops that very soon we are going to interview. There are two retired bishops, Bishop Kirkendal who lives in Jackson and Bishop Buntin who lives here in Memphis who are both very rich in age and if we are going to do it we need to really be about it.

And one of the things that I wanted to say, that you begin your own history by having a vision, and if I may fall on, you know, Biblical sources, it's like Moses and the burning bush – the urge is always there. Some of you were here yesterday, you know that I have done a project on medical people, particularly Black physicians in West Tennessee. And as long as you know there is a subject there, it will not let you rest. It will not let

you rest. You just have to keep going and going. Whether you have the money to do it or not, there will be a way some way and you just have to find that way. The other thing is that, in doing oral histories, procrastination doesn't work very well. Because, particularly if you are working with subjects who are aged and if they particularly have made a rich contribution, you want to go ahead and do that, you know, while they are with you, and it isn't like you want to be morbid, but you just want to be realistic. And Memphis has some very rich heritage and I was so happy that a couple of weeks ago when Dr. Brewster died that his contributions had been recorded in the Smithsonian, because he had made a very valuable contribution to the Memphis community and the world.

I wanted to back up what Dr. Johnson said, and that is is that we need to keep an avenue open to the sources that are available. I speak specifically of the Memphis Room. That's a rich source in terms of using that as getting information for the kinds of materials that we need. Also in terms of what Dr. Delk said about the Sweeney Room at LeMoyne, there is no reason why that Memphis could not have that which is comparable to the Schumberg Collection. But it just takes that initiative on the part of a few. And then being a minister, I just have a faith that if people see what

we're trying to do eventually their hearts will open, they will come and help you. But it takes that, so we're hoping that with the CME Church that we are going to be able to go ahead and interview the remaining bishops because all of them have a very rich heritage and have made such a valuable contribution to the society and then of course with the church being related to Lane College, which is one of the outstanding Black colleges, it means quite a bit.

So that oral history is very important. And I was happy to know after attending some of these sessions that it's pretty much left to the individual how much you will get out of it. You've got to set your goals and decide that I really want this to be a contribution that will be passed on and that it will be meaningful from generation to generation and so I think we've got to, also, keep that in mind. Also one of the things that I think we find with the church is that it's such a valuable source. I mean, within the church you have such a multiplicity of people that can impact the oral history and give it some color and some flavor that it needs to be utilized to its greatest extent.

So I think that I would say in beginning your oral history is just to keep your vision in mind and if you're committed to the cause, then go for

it. And you'll always find those who are interested in helping you to accomplish the task and then being related to the public library to know that there is a source where you can deposit your findings and your results. (Applause)

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: Let me make just a couple of quick comments and then open up for questions. One of the things that has come through these speakers is the importance of preserving our history for generations to come. And I think when you get into oral history a person who hasn't been aware of the meaning of history becomes aware of the urgency, as you're talking with people who are alive and tomorrow they're gone. You just realize how important it is to save this history. And so I think the, we'll say, quote unquote, the average person understands the urgency and the need to preserve history. And when they get involved in oral history that they perhaps do not understand that they're dealing with the documents, and I think the idea.

People have to understand, and now that you've been introduced to oral history you have this understanding of the need to find a place to preserve this material for you. Often people go out and do some oral history, interview people and then they say, "Well I don't know what to do with

this." Okay. Dr. Johnson has said there is a place that's interested in Memphis and accepting this material and preserving it for future. People do oral history, then, their tapes are in their basements or in their bedrooms, their attics or whatever, and so there's not only the problem of preserving them physically to pass the material on. But in an archival sense, tapes wear out. They don't last forever and here is an institution that says we are willing, we are able to help you with that. I think it's important to get the word around that if you're going to be doing oral history, don't just do it and then let the tapes die someplace. They should be preserved.

And then the discussion of legal agreements. People, I know they have come to me at the Schlessinger Library, "Oh, I did this oral history, here are the tapes." And I say, "Well, the library wants to make the material available to researchers. If we're going to take it, we're not just taking it and hiding it. We want to make it available so the person who has given the interview should understand that this material is going to a library, that we want them to sign some kind of release that says, "Yes, I'm willing to make this material available for the public." So I think those are some of the points that came out in these talks. I think all of you should be

aware of as you work with oral history. Now, questions, please.

JEANNE DREIFUS: Well, I don't have a question, as usual...

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: Comments, then. (Laughter)

JEANNE DREIFUS: No, well, aside from appreciating very much your contributions to all this, I want to say that I have to take responsibility for not having made available to you the Mississippi Valley Collection. Now it was in part on our tour yesterday, which because of acts of God and other things we were not able to complete. But the Mississippi Valley Collection and its staff I know is known to all of you. Did you mention that?

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: No, I did not.

JEANNE DREIFUS: All right, well I do want to just say, because, not only that, but you are very much invited to go and visit it today at Brister Library in the special collection. And they, too, are a repository for papers and tapes and interviews that several faculty members have done and that the public has made available and they have also a very kind staff who also would be more than willing to share with you not only the resources there but to talk with you about your work and what you like to do. And I apologize to

them and to you for not having more material, but it's right here on our campus and you're invited to visit there and share in their resources.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: For your legal release, a tape, do you actually have a lawyer or somebody to sign it with you or can you just do it yourself?

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: No, of the ones at the Schlesinger Library, I think a Harvard-Radcliffe lawyer looked them over just in general terms and then we have made adjustments. But the interviewer signs, the interviewee signs, and I sign as a representative of Radcliffe College, and we give each one of them a copy of the agreement and we keep the original in the library. Yes?

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: For Dr. Johnson. What is the policy with reference to these kinds of tapes and this sort of information when it comes to inter- library loans?

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: I just want to take a question I'm hearing in the back. Her question has to do with the policy on inter-library loans for tapes.

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: We don't loan our tapes on inter-library loan.

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: We don't loan our tapes either. What we

have done is the original cassette tape we keep as a listening copy and then we had, at the very beginning we had it transfered to open-reel tape, which is our archival copy. But the tapes are not loaned. The transcripts are loaned inter-library loan.

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: I'm going to go back to Jeanne's statement. So that there's not a lot of confusion about the Memphis Room and the Mississippi Valley Collection. We at the Memphis and Shelby County Room collect only on Memphis and Shelby County. So if you have an interview with people in the region and they are not Memphians or Shelby Countians, well then you need to check with the Mississippi Valley Collection. We, a long time ago, decided that we were going to try to be very good at one thing, and so that's what we're trying to do. We're trying to really collect, as much as we can, information on Memphis and Shelby County. We realize that we cannot collect other things, even though they look great when they come in, but we will. If we're doing our job, which we do, we will refer you to Mississippi Valley Collection or to some other collection.

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: That's one of the advantages of being in touch with a library or some resource like

this. If they can't take the material, then they are in a position to know who would be interested.

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: I think that's important in doing your... beginning your own oral history is the fact to realize your limitations, to realize that you cannot do everything and it's better if you do one thing well than to do fifty and then not be followed through.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: My question is directed to my colleague, Jim Johnson. I'm looking at this program guide from 1980 and I do understand time as a factor. But I am appalled to find, in the contents page, that the Black history in Memphis here is treated by at least five people, four people, four of whom I know are not Black. And what has been done by Memphis and Shelby County Public Library to cap the historians in the Black community?

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: We are working with historians in the Black community, have a good relationship with more than one.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: I'm sure. It just doesn't reflect it.

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: In which we have, once again, tried. We see

our role as encouraging others to go into the community, once again, all parts of our community, and collect information in the entire variety of materials that we can. And the one aspect is, you know, oral history. But photographs and manuscripts, books, pamphlets, anything that we can that would be helpful as far as the material. And we do have a working relationship with a number of people in the community and we're trying to always develop that.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: This just doesn't reflect that?

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: This was done in 1980, we do have more up-to-date. Yes?

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: I think one of the problems with it is that it doesn't list who the interviewee was. If it did...

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: It also leaves out Beale Black and Blue because that was after this, so this needs to be updated.

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: But is this a reflection of just having been a recipient, a depository of material that other people have collected?

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: Well, and also our encouragement of other people to collect.

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: As it's growing.

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: Yes. As it grows.

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: This woman here who had a hand raised again. Do you have a question?

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: I'd like to know whether that will be updated eventually?

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: It is in the process of being updated now.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Oh. Good.

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: In fact, we have... hopefully, be able to go to the printer's soon.

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: Any more questions?

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: I have a comment.

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: Well, if there's time. No one's asking more questions from the panel.

PROF. FANNIE DELK: I wanted to note that Reverend Blair Hunt, for example, Mr. J. Ashton Hayes, and all of those are part of the fifty-five people that we have included in the

vignettes. And I also wanted to note that we are considering ways, and maybe someone in the audience has something to offer here. We're considering ways at Memphis Black Writers Workshop of taking the oral to another stage as in videotape, cassette, et cetera, and then bringing it back to the oral again in order to increase the life of it, for example. So I was listening to Brother Blue last night, and I thought, isn't this wonderful stories. So what could happen if we had stories that children could learn from. Not just to call vignettes of the subjects here. Suppose these subjects on these photographs lived for the children, let's say. We could never be Brother Blue. We do understand that (Laughter). That was marvelous to me.

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: One of the other things I was going to say, with oral history, oftentimes that becomes the first avenue in total collection. Oral history, as you have interviewed a person, then that oftentimes is followed by photographs, by the written word, by other things that the person might have that would be helpful to you. I know with our collection, one of the things that we have is Metropolitan Interfaith Association's local history. They went into communities and tried to write histories of each of those communities.

And in the process of doing that. Then other things came from that community because that person, as they were being interviewed, realized that there was someone truly interested and that what they knew and what they had was important for the community now and the community in the future. So oral history oftentimes is just the beginning I think. You know, those that have worked in it, realize that.

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: I'll comment on that because the Schlesinger Library, library on history of women in America, had very very little material about Black women. And if it had not been for this oral history project, I could not honestly say that the Schlesinger Library represented American women. But from the oral history project, women have begun to devise that correspondence, other materials, and I think that the Schlesinger library, basically, will become truely representative of these contributions. So if it hadn't been for one Black woman who was on the advisory committee of the Schlesinger Library, this probably never would have happened. But I'm glad that it did happen, obviously.

REV. HAROLD CHANDLER: Well, in addition to that this tape that we did with Bishop Graves, and after it was

over, he said, you know, "That was fun." And so it was like that he opened the door to the other bishops so when we get ready to do them, it will not be such a chore.

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: One thing interesting about the Women of Courage exhibit. It's based on the Black Women Oral History Project, and the interviewers in the project, except for maybe, I can't remember exactly, but two or three, had been Black women. Well, it came to the photographs. Judith Sedwick is white and she just contacted me and asked about doing the photographs. So later on I found out that when some woman had been contacted by Judith and they would call another woman they knew was in the project and ask about Judith. But there was all of this undercurrent of – (Laughter) "Is she Black?" It was like, "Why is she doing this kind of thing?" A lot of interesting things that went on with the project. And the fact that Radcliffe was involved, and why would Radcliffe want to do this. But one good reference, if it was a good experience, if the interview was a good experience, or the photographic session was a good experience, it did open the doors to others.

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: I would like to make one other comment.

Something that you have alluded to. In working on local history, if we're talking about recent local history, all of us, if we've lived here very long, are local history experts, right? (Laughter) So one of the things that we've noticed is, that as we've worked on local history or as we've collected materials. Of course, we're just the collectors and we're the people that try to make it accessible to the whole public. And as we're doing that, it's interesting to listen to people's comments about, "Well, you know, that history of whatever, is completely wrong. (Laughter) I lived through that and that never happened to me. I can't believe that twenty or fifty years from now people will actually think that that happened."

So, the point I want to make is, traditionally, we've relied upon the printed word. I've mentioned about the letters that the businessman wrote back home to his wife in Virginia. Wouldn't it have been great to have had a tape recorder and be able to talk to other people who didn't have time to write, couldn't write, decided not to write, had no one to write to? That way we would have seen more of the community. But regardless of what we collect, and regardless of what you collect, you will be criticized for not collecting true history. Because true history is in the minds of each

individual.

We can kind of agree on true history a hundred years ago because we weren't there. (Laughter) But true history since 1941, I know. If it were in my area. So in local history, we're all experts and in local history, as we're collecting and writing and doing whatever we're doing, we have to be aware that there are going to be just as many people that are going to be pleased with what you're doing. I mean there are going to be just as many people displeased with what you're doing as there will be people who will be pleased with what you're doing. And you just have to decided, "I'm going to collect what I can do, and that's going to be it."

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: Listening to remarks that Jeanne has made and Jim, it occurs to me – I always think of more work, right? But it seems to me now we've had another oral history conference, another history workshop, that we do need a pathfinder to collecting oral history that includes Mississippii Valley. All that stuff needs to be put on there and be available so we know. It's just a simple pathfinder, libraries do it every day. But we probably need to do that for oral history.

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: There was a question back here.

QUESTION FROM AUDIENCE: I just wanted to tease this point a bit more because I'm very concerned about people who have to take an easy way out. I think that we have to struggle to be a bit more responsible wherever we are and whatever we're doing. I think the fundamental difference between a person who may be interested in tracking their family history versus a person who's working with a neighborhood association versus a voluntary association of writers or a religious institution versus a community institution that is supported by tax dollars from everyone in the state. And I think the later institution has a greater responsibility to be as comprehensive as possible and then let the argument and the criticisms fall out. Because like Maxine and I too, and my colleague Dr. Johnson, I was appalled when I saw this, because I think that even with the 1980's, this is far too late. And even when I went you were just left the filing the Black history aside and said, "Well, there's Douglas, that's Black and then there were this over here and the things did this," and I was able to perhaps flesh out a more representative statement on the Black experience in Memphis.

This, in 1980, was still far too insufficient, and in 1987, I know there has been a lot more collected. There is a responsibility not to be

simply the recipient, but to be an agressive seeker of all the components that make up the community's history.

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: I do want to say that we see ourselves as an agressive group of people who are trying to collect all aspects of our community. And we're trying to encourage everyone to deposit their materials with us. And we try to keep on top of what is being done and hopefully guide people into areas where they can work and where what they would be doing would be helpful.

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: We'll try to take one more and go back.

PROF. FANNIE DELK: Those Thursday night affairs you had at the public library, are they being made a part of your archives? Black women in education, are being made available to the larger community, is the question I'm asking?

DR. JAMES JOHNSON: Yes

CLAUDETTE NICHOLS: Let me respond to that a little more fully, because they aren't being copied and transcribed, the actual Thursday night sessions. But a videotape is being made of a representative sampling of women of each group. And the videotape will be shown in February and March over CIT and will be

available.

DR. RUTH EDMONDS HILL: Dr. Crawford would like to make a few closing remarks, and then we'll have Miss Nichols.

DR. CHARLES CRAWFORD: First of all, on behalf of Memphis State University and the Oral History Research Office, we appreciate very much the work of our participants, Reverend Chandler, Professor Delk, and Dr. Johnson, Dr. Hill and Brother Blue, Drs. Harrison and Strickland, and we appreciate very much the attendance of everyone. We have taped this, and there may be some lessons for oral history in this for you. We have done the best we could to tape sessions and we will try to provide duplicates of the tape if anyone wants to have copies of any of the sessions. Now, I do believe that at some of our programs, the people doing it managed to wander away from the microphone, but we have done the best we can and we will provide what we have and we will be happy to do it if it helps you. In any case we would need your request and a place to mail, so please give us name and address and whatever request you have, if you do. We ask also that if anyone is here who failed to sign our registration list outside, please do so. I think

we have about fifty-seven names thus far and we would like to get sixty if we could. So if anyone has failed to do that, please do so.

Also, on behalf of Memphis State, if, after leaving the conference and continuing oral history work or beginning oral history work in the community you need any help, please feel free to call on us. I'll be glad to try to answer any questions I can. Furthermore, we would be delighted to have duplicates of any interviews you do in this community to place in our permanent collection. That is, in addition to the ones I assume you will wish to keep. I believe Dr. Johnson's collection also is interested in such things so there are resources, that is, there are long-term collections of historical memoirs of the community and we stand ready to help you. We will be happy to in any way we can. We very much appreciate your attending. We hope that the session has been productive and if we have any concluding announcements or any wrap-up, yes, let's go ahead to that.

CLAUDETTE NICHOLS: There isn't really much that I can add to what Dr. Crawford has already said, except that nothing is ever accomplished without people coming together at a particular time and place, and we've done that. I feel that we've accomplished much in the last two days. I, too, wish to express my

appreciation to our very fine and distinguished panelists for your sharing with us and most definitely to Jeanie Dreifus and her committee for bringing the oral history conference to this community. I certainly hope that we can look foreward to a conference, let's say, end of next year and hopefully we can expand on it. This has been a tremendous opportunity for us and I certainly appreciated the opportunity to share in it.

The CME Church, as has been indicated, has initiated our project and of course, Memphis State University has been a tremendous source of inspiration and strength to us in that project. And as I sat there, I was wondering how can I expand myself just a little bit more, and Fannie, I certainly would be more than happy to help in any way that I can to help in your LeMoyne endeavor. Thank you. (Applause)

[End of Closing Session. Announcements follow]

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